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Truth, reconciliation and First Nations child welfare

Mike Hogeterp

OTTAWA, Ont. — There are more First Nations children in the care of child welfare authorities today than the population of residential schools at the peak of their operation. More than ten percent of status Indian children were in care as of May 2005, compared to less than one percent of non-aboriginal children in Canada.

First Nations children come into contact with child welfare systems because of neglect rising from inadequate housing, poverty, and substance abuse. By contrast, non-Aboriginal children are typically taken into care for physical, sexual and emotional abuse and exposure to domestic violence — and most child welfare systems are designed primarily to react to these situations

rather than address structural social problems. The difficulty of addressing chronic structural causes of neglect is a major reason for the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in child welfare systems.

This reality of child and family welfare must be remembered as indigenous peoples and the non-indigenous peoples of Canada take up a process of truth and



reconciliation. The first step was on June 11, 2008, when the Prime

Minister and opposition leaders See **First Nations** on p. 2



Will debt forgiveness guarantee Haiti a viable future?

Harold Alkema

In the aftermath of the earthquakes in Haiti this past January, many Christian organizations began to petition for the cancellation of the small Caribbean nation's external debt. When the finance ministers of the world's most powerful economic countries met for the G7 conference in Iqaluit, Nunavut in

Finance Minister Jim Flaherty at the conference. In a statement, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown built on Flaherty's comment: "It must be right that a nation buried in rubble must not also be buried in debt. The UK has already cancelled all debts owed to it by Haiti and I strongly welcome today's G7 commitment to forgive

Good issued a statement that said: "We believe that Jesus calls us to work together to set free those who are held captive by debt. This call is especially acute in times of crisis. . . . In light of the catastrophic earthquake and the destruction of Haiti's already fragile infrastructure, we, the undersigned, call upon all nations and institutions that have made loans to the Haitian government to quickly and completely forgive these debts."

The UK-based agency Christian Aid made a similar appeal as early as January 21st. The organization asked Chancellor Alistair Darling to use his influence with the IMF, the Inter-American Development Bank, and other creditors to cancel Haiti's external debt. Christian Aid stated in its petition to Darling: "Christian Aid is responding to the disaster in Haiti with emergency aid. But we need to help Haiti in the long-term as well as the short-

See **Haiti** on p. 2

The tiny country has been saddled with crushing debt ever since it gained independence from France in 1804.

February, they also called for the end of Haiti's debt. The world's seven major industrial countries asked the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other multilateral agencies to forgive Haiti's foreign debt in light of the current crisis.

"The debt to multilateral institutions should be forgiven," said Canadian

Haiti's remaining multilateral debt. We will work with others to make sure this is delivered."

Many of the Christian agencies that initiated the call for debt forgiveness expressed their hope that long-term debt relief would give Haiti the opportunity to re-build and to create a better future for its citizens. In the United States, a group known as the New Evangelical Partnership for the Common



News

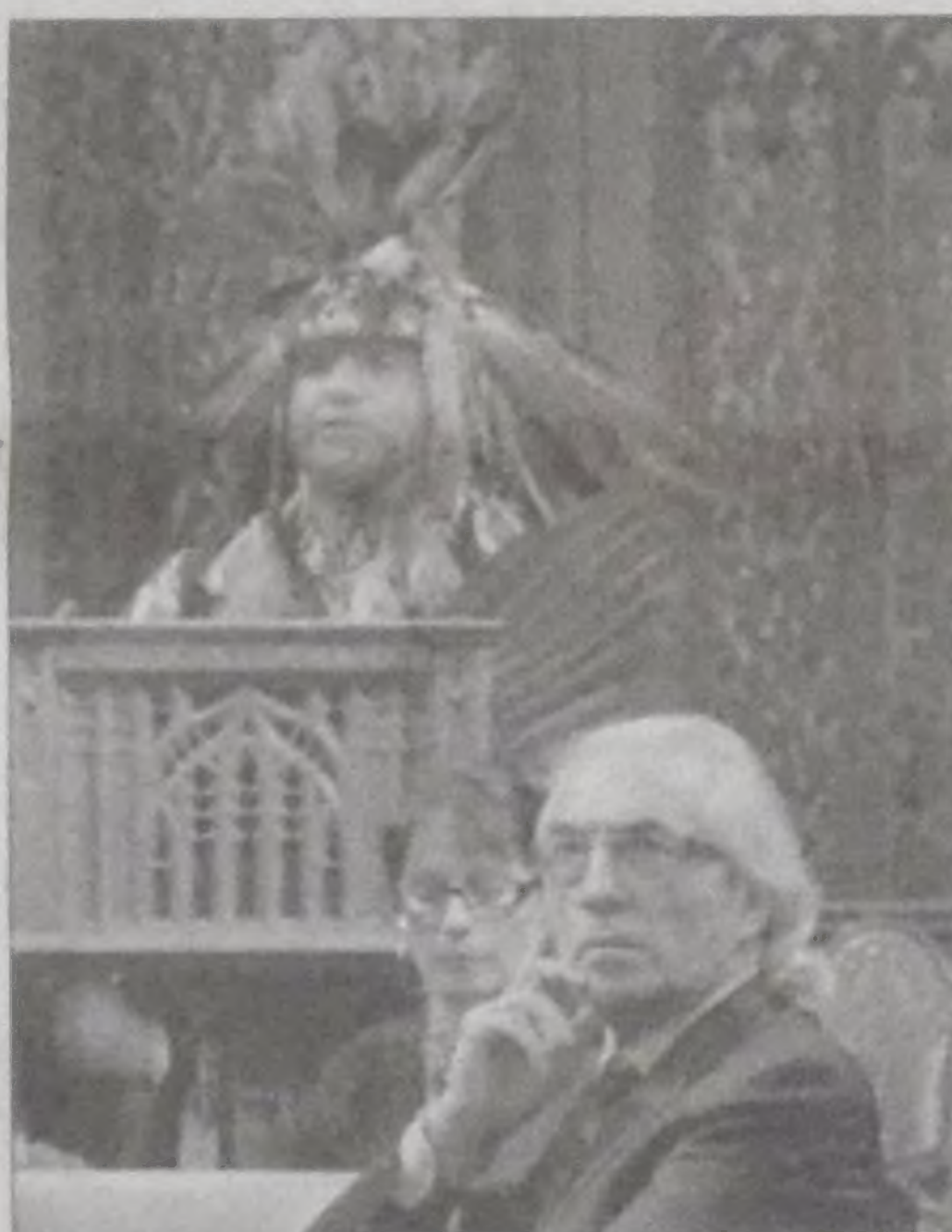
First Nations *continued*

stood in the House of Commons and apologized for the suffering that the Indian Residential Schools system brought to Aboriginal children, families and communities. Official assimilation policies pulled generations of Indigenous children from the love of family and community and placed them in an environment designed to “kill the Indian in the child.” The children lost their roots and traditions and missed the critical and formative opportunity to observe parents, marriages and functioning families. Even with residential schools long since closed, this heritage of brokenness continues to affect Indigenous communities profoundly. And addressing this issue, including the welfare of First Nations children, is a key part of any progress towards truth and reconciliation.

Painstakingly slow

The Department of Indian Affairs is aware of these troubling issues and has responded with a good range of consultations and studies. The Auditor General (2008) and a House of Commons Committee (Public Accounts, 2009) have also studied child welfare funding in First Nations communities. Their reports suggest that greater funding is necessary to improve prevention services, to minimize family disruptions, and to address high operating costs in remote communities. There are also complications related to overlapping

Phil Fontaine, the outgoing chief of the Assembly of First Nations and a former residential school student, listens to Kevin Daniels, interim national chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

Haiti *continued*

term. We are calling on the UK to lead the world in giving Haiti a fighting chance for the future by cancelling its \$890 million of international debt.”

Year of Jubilee?

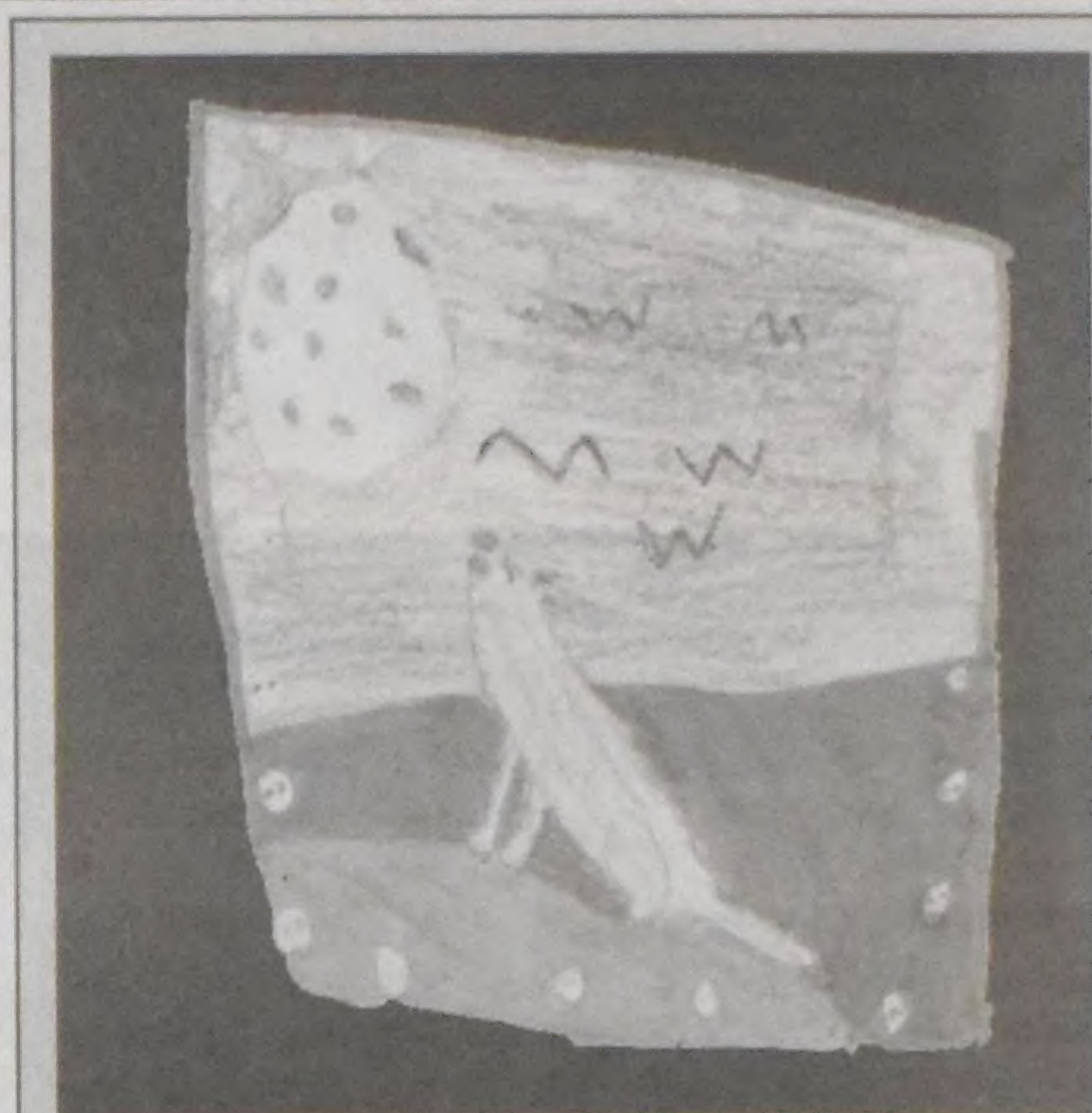
It seems as if progress is being made in terms of dealing with Haiti's debt and the country's immediate need for aid. Shortly after the earthquakes, the IMF approved an interest-free \$102 million loan to Haiti, while the World Bank provided a grant of \$100 million. In July of 2009 the IMF, World Bank and United States government cancelled \$1.2 billion worth of Haiti's debt. The cancellation of this



federal, provincial and First Nations jurisdictions that lead to inequities in funding. All together these issues result in a lesser standard of care for First Nations children than the standards for non-aboriginal children in child welfare. Consequently, there has been clear acknowledgement across government and First Nations that new approaches and funding arrangements are necessary – but progress has been slow. To date, the Department of Indian Affairs has implemented new funding models in four provinces, but there is no publicly available information on addressing the inequities.

The lack of progress on a new national funding model has been a concern for the Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations (FN) Child and Family Caring Society. These First Nations-led organizations brought their concerns about inequity in child welfare systems to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in the fall of 2008. They asked the tribunal to address the inequities in child welfare services. The case alleges that the inequities in First Nations child welfare funding and approaches constitute discrimination against First Nations children. The government has contested the case, largely on procedural grounds. This winter the newly appointed head of the tribunal agreed to hear the government's application to suspend proceedings on the case.

Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of the First Nations Family and Caring Society, is a passionate voice for First Nations child welfare. She's leading the Human Rights Tribunal initiative. Blackstock speaks widely and frequently on the inequities experienced by First Nations families and children. She calls the case and the terrible realities that led to it a “moral issue” and ties it directly to the integrity of the sentiments of the Prime Minister's apology and the process of truth and reconciliation. “Reconciliation” she says, “means not saying sorry twice.” It means “not just



Drawing by Alyssa Collier in Reconciliation in child welfare.

Touchstones of hope

TruthTelling: Listening and sharing regarding child welfare's past

Acknowledging: Affirming and learning from the past and embracing new possibilities for the future

Restoring: Addressing the problems of the past and creating a better path for the future

Relating: Having recognized that Indigenous peoples are in the best position to make decisions about Indigenous children and youth, we move forward together in a respectful way, along a new path, to achieve better outcomes for Indigenous children and youth.

– Excerpted from *Reconciliation in child welfare* at reconciliationmovement.org.

saying the right thing, but doing the right thing.”

Mike Hogeterp works out a love for justice as the Research and Communications manager for Committee for Contact with the Government of the CRC in Canada.



portion of Haiti's international debt came about partially in recognition of the fact that Haiti had already suffered a number of humanitarian crises before the January 2010 earthquakes. These disasters included four hurricanes in 2008 and a general spike in food prices that made it difficult for ordinary Haitians to buy food.

In spite of these gains, some pundits have pointed out that aid and debt relief alone cannot help Haiti's plight much. The island nation is the poorest in the Western Hemisphere; between 60 and 70 per cent of Haitians are employed; 80 per cent lived in poverty even before the January earthquakes; and now roughly 200,000 have died as a result of the disaster and hundreds of thousands more are homeless.

Hypocritical help

Perhaps most troubling is the First World's track record in dealing with Haiti. The tiny country has been saddled with crushing debt ever since it gained independence from France in 1804. The Haitian government was forced to take loans worth 105 million francs from a French bank or face invasion by French forces in 1825. The French demanded the money as compensation for the loss of “property” including Haitian slaves. Haiti was not able to pay off the debt until 1947.

Between 1957 and 1986 the dictatorship of Francois “Papa Doc” Duvalier and Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier siphoned off hundreds of millions of dollars in aid and

assistance for their own benefit while forcing their country to carry the debt they incurred. In the last ten years, Haiti has also seen five different governments come and go. Needless to say, this combination of foreign exploitation, corruption and instability has hampered development.

University of Alberta political science professor Fred Judson notes that Canada, France and the US all contributed to this political instability by supporting a coup in 2004 that ousted the reformist Jean-Bertrand Aristide government. After the coup, in 2006, Ottawa pledged \$520 million in aid over a five year period to the new government to demonstrate its support for the takeover.

Following the cancellation of part of Haiti's debt in June of 2009, Judson said: “It is pretty rich to hear this kind of discourse from Canada about how we're going to help out the poor Haitians, when we did everything possible to avoid the kind of political regime that might have made a difference to the majority of poor Haitians ... I just find it stinking of hypocrisy.” According to Judson, countries like Haiti will always remain weak, impoverished and vulnerable to man-made and natural disasters if the First World does not allow them to control their own political destinies.

Harold Alkema is a public researcher living in Ottawa.



News

Turning around the prodigal economy

John Clement

GUELPH, Ont. (CFFO) – Our economy is off-track and needs a new vision that will fix our problems and reconnect us with our most basic life commitments. That's the paraphrased viewpoint of Dr. Bob Goudzwaard, a former member of the Dutch Parliament and professor of economics and social philosophy at the Free University of Amsterdam.

Goudzwaard was recently in Ontario and spoke at a few locations about his analysis of troubling signs in the economies of the Western world. With long involvement in international development, Goudzwaard most recently chaired a two-year consultation between the World Council of Churches, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. And he travels in interesting company – his most recent book has an introduction by Bishop Desmond Tutu.

According to Goudzwaard, the Western world has a fundamental belief in the creation of dynamic patterns in society that can transcend limitations. In other words, progress. And he says we rarely doubt the fundamental idea of progress but rather become concerned about a slowing of its rate and its resulting impact on our lives. We believe, he says, that nature must adapt to our wishes and desires.



Goudzwaard believes that we are at a watershed. He says that we are experiencing difficulties and challenges in energy, food availability, poverty, security and in the environment. These things are all mutually reinforcing and magnifying problems. And he says the solution of more of the same – more security, more technology, more money – won't solve the problems we face. We need a shift, he says, in our most basic attitudes towards our everyday pursuits.

Goudzwaard, in my paraphrase of his ideas, states the importance of having our economies grounded in our most basic life commitments. He's not saying those basic life commitments are open to debate; they are based on the fact that we are limited creatures with obligatory connections to people, the Creation and spiritual life. According to Goudzwaard, much like the parable of the prodigal son in the Scriptures, our economy needs to "come to its senses" and revisit ways that generate true prosperity.

Farmers, more than many sectors of society, can probably sympathize and agree with Goudzwaard's perspective. After all, they are usually keenly aware of the biological, technological, financial, social, and environmental limits on their activities. And I would venture that more than a few have a strong sense of the Creator's call for a stewardship of the gifts they have received. Perhaps it's time to heed Goudzwaard's cautionary advice and consider whether our economy is indeed acting like the prodigal son and needs to return home.



John Clement is the General Manager of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario.

Immortality and resurrection



Anastasis – fresco in Monastery of Chora in Constantinople

people to accept. The Athenians laughed at Paul when he mentioned it (Acts 17:32). Many scientists today scoff at the notion that dead cells can be revived. If our ultimate hope is in God intervening actively at some point in the indefinite future, raising every human being who has ever lived and inaugurating the new heaven and earth, this requires more of us than a belief in immortality, which leaves the present world, including human remains, untouched.

During the Easter season we celebrate the resurrection from the dead of Jesus Christ, "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (I Cor. 15:20). Not everyone can accept this, even among those who name Christ's name. Theologian Rudolf Bultmann famously argued that the crucifixion and the resurrection were one event, the latter consisting of the rising of faith in the early church and not literally of a dead person.

Yet Paul himself had anticipated this argument: "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. . . . And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost" (I Cor. 15:13-14, 17-18).



But, no, we are not lost. We have God's promise that, as surely as Jesus was raised from the dead, so shall we be raised in his good time to eternal life. It may happen tomorrow. It may happen a thousand years from now. But it will happen. Thanks be to God, who has saved us through his risen Son!

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and blogs at: <http://firstthings.com/blogs/evangel/>.



Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

In our society it is not difficult for people to believe in the immortality of the human soul. Even where Christian faith is not necessarily robust, public opinion polls persistently show a majority of North Americans in some fashion to believe in God and in life after death. Following a death in the family people will often claim to believe that their departed loved one is "somewhere else" and possibly looking down on them from on high. But it's all quite vague and amorphous.

It takes no great effort to believe this. Plato famously believed in reincarnation, as does Hinduism and the varieties of post-modern spiritual experience grouped under the New Age label. Moreover, it seems to take little work on God's part for a soul to drift off into the ether after the demise of the body.

Even some Christians believe that our ultimate destiny is in an incorporeal state with God in heaven. I recall a funeral in my youth in which the presiding minister conspicuously omitted any reference to resurrection, focussing solely on soul survival at the expense of the clear teachings of Scripture (e.g., I Corinthians 15).

A stone to make men stumble

Why the reluctance to put the resurrection in the spotlight? Because it is quite simply more difficult for people to accept. The Athenians laughed at Paul when he mentioned it (Acts 17:32). Many scientists today scoff at the notion that dead cells can be revived. If our ultimate hope is in God intervening actively at some point in the indefinite future, raising every human being who has ever lived and inaugurating the new heaven and earth, this requires more of us than a belief in immortality, which leaves the present world, including human remains, untouched.

"The solution of more of the same – more security, more technology, more money – won't solve the problems we face."

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Editorials

The mechanics of fear



Angela Reitsma Bick

They keep coming to the door. No, not Jehovah's witnesses (though we get those too). Stern-looking men or women knock and then stand there, unsmiling, ruffling through a thin handful of papers.

"I'm from the Evergreen program," they begin. "We're making all the homes on your street carbon neutral. Let's-see-your-latest-bill-and-get-you-started."

These solicitors employ a variety of tricks. They might imply our electricity or natural gas providers sent them. They might mumble or act like there's no time to explain details. They might apply peer pressure by pointing out which clever neighbours have already signed up. Sooner or later, the dotted line on a years-long contract is whipped out. And the rushed sales pitch is always accompanied by the pounding bass beat of fear. I'm supposed to be terrified that, without the convenience of locked-in prices, my family will soon be sitting in a cold, dark house.

Sound familiar? Climate change has become a reliable boogeyman, and if we don't do something about it immediately we'll all be sitting in a hot, wet world – or is that a cold, dark one? Either way, trouble's coming. And while I agree that we need to rethink much of our over-industrialized, mega-consuming lifestyles, I'm tired of scare tactics.

Swiftly hurting planet

I grew up in a culture of environmental guilt. I devoured dystopian novels where the remaining humans have only a vague understanding of technology but are certain that its misuse led to calamity. As a teenager, I could see those calamities coming. The news seemed full of the effects of harmful human activity: endangered species, shrinking rainforests, acid rain, ozone depletion. It was generally accepted that we were negatively impacting the earth – only the result, or perhaps the worst offender, was up for debate.

Fifteen years later, the rhetoric has not changed. The environmental movement has become even more pervasive, moving beyond the imagination of science

fiction writers into the mainstream. Corporations use "green" to leverage sales. And I can hardly pick up ten children's books from the library without coming home with *Dora's Earth Day* or *The Berenstain Bears Don't Pollute Anymore*.

But as an inspiring movement, environmentalism has failed. Despite decades of impassioned speeches, books, movies and conferences, North Americans haven't altered their lifestyles to protect the environment. Will seeing the streams in Bear Country filled with garbage convince us when David Suzuki can't? Probably not, and a steady diet of bad news is part of the problem. Real change can't be motivated by fear.

How great thou art

As I mentioned, we've had our share of Jehovah's Witnesses come knocking. Their literature, *The Watchtower*, plays on fear, too: *Is the nuclear threat over? Are we running out of water?* They also see an Armageddon coming, which only God's chosen will survive. They try to win converts by scaring them into the fold.

Although David and Solomon agree that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10a, Prov. 1:7), that's only part of the story. God's power is awe-inspiring, and the thought of judgement does make me tremble. But that appropriate fear is just stage one of wisdom. We can't function in perpetual terror of our Creator. True wisdom puts knowledge into practice; in other words, fear the Lord and follow him (Ps. 111:10b). Glorify God at church and in every part of this world.

The environmental movement is hampered by the worst-case scenarios featured in movies like *The Day After Tomorrow*, *An Inconvenient Truth* and *2012*. This type of imagining immobilizes. It's far preferable to nurture hope – to imagine other ways of living that glorify God or put us closer to the environment we love to talk so much about.

Within reach

I'm halfway through *The Geography of Hope: A Tour of the World We Need* by Chris Turner, a Canadian journalist. The book explores new ways of generating energy around the globe: from the development of thin-film solar cells in Germany to floating wind generators in Ottawa; from wave-power generators off the coast of Spain to a Thai architect whose houses produce more energy than they use. *This* is a book that inspires action. *This* is a door-step conversation I'd love to have.

And one of his first examples has stuck with me: in 1997, a small Danish island called Samsø (114 square miles; population 4,400) won a government contest by claiming it could become a "Renewable Energy Island" within ten years. By 2005, Samsø's wind farms, solar panels, wood-chip and straw-fired plants supplied all of the island's electricity and heating needs.

Incredibly, the whole project cost just over half of the price tag to produce *The Day After Tomorrow*, a climate-change catastrophe movie with a \$125 million budget (p. 36).

In other words, we have the methods, the money and the means for a wide-scale shift to sustainable living. It's our will that's strangely lacking. If we can unshackle ourselves from fearing the future – if we can begin to hope and plan instead – then change is possible. In that case, I would like more information. I would like a chance to review data from someone without an agenda. Then you are welcome to step inside for a moment, because I am ready to listen. ✕

Angela Reitsma Bick is co-editor of Christian Courier. She lives in Barrie, Ontario.

Is race a non-issue?



Brett Alan Dewing

Over the past year and a half, I've heard a lot about "the age of Obama." Movie reviews will look at the interaction of black characters and white characters, proclaiming their banter as irrelevant in "the Obama age." Certain race-related concerns in the news are dismissed as not germane "post-Obama."

The gist of these terms seems to be that race is a relative non-issue since Barack Obama took office. Now, certainly no one thinks that this one event produced a magical, instant change in the social environment of the USA. The idea, then, seems to be that a gradual change has been occurring, making the election of a black American president possible. The question is whether that change is complete and has resulted in a post-race society.

Race and racism

I notice a difference in the approach to race between generations. My interactions with people over the age of fifty have almost always uncovered a subtle (or, in some cases, blatant) racism.

My grandmother would talk about "the coloureds" and "the way they are," once commenting that "some of them aren't that bad." Compared to this, my mother's consistent reference to people with non-Western clothes or Asian complexions as "foreigners" naturally doesn't seem too bad. When I hear her use that term, though, my spine crawls.

I cannot deny that the transition from my grandmother to my mother is a positive one. That transition, however, has continued into my generation, to the point where racism is almost never present in my experience. I certainly don't pretend that racism is nonexistent among my peers. Hatred of various kinds will always be with us. But I have never heard a friend or student make a racist remark. And so, I believe that racism is largely (and relatively) a non-issue for my generation.

However, I do not at all believe that race is a non-issue. Race, for those my age, is always present. No one pretends that we are all the same. References are constantly made to each other's ethnicity and culture. Race is a definite issue – it simply isn't weighted: no one is placed in a hierarchy, and no racial assumptions are made. In fact, in my opinion, race is normative.

And God created race...

I see no other way to read the story of Babel than to say that God created race for our own good. I do not serve a God who would be threatened by human endeavour, and so the traditional reading that God was protecting himself by confusing the languages of his people. He need not worry that the tower would actually reach heaven – the very idea is ridiculous. The danger in the attempt was the foolish tenacity and ambition of mankind.

I believe that we need to always be aware of race. It is God's creation and a gift. The idea that people of different races should feel no tension between them is counter-creational. Experience has taught us that tension is a key ingredient in productive relationships. Do we truly want to have a comfortable marriage? Do we want to have an easy job? Do we desire friendships that require no work? Sometimes we might think we do, but reflection usually tells us otherwise. Often it is the challenges and the tensions that lead us to real intimacy and fulfillment.

It is the same with race. We should never be afraid of acknowledging our differences. The very idea of the "Obama age" is based in a close scrutiny of race. Those who use it to suggest that race no longer matters and that we are all one now not only misunderstand race, but they champion a society that goes against God's design. Let us continue to stomp out racism, but let us always cherish race. ✕

Brett Alan Dewing is co-editor of Christian Courier.

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Canada

Short story

Praying like a man



Bert Witvoet

"Before we leave South Africa, I would like to take in an Afrikaner church service," I said to Alice. She agreed. So we found the *Gereformeerde Kerk* of Louis Trichardt. The service was at 9 a.m. By the time we got there the church was almost full. But we found a spot in a bench not too far from the front. As we were about to move into the bench beside three children, I noticed that they were eyeing us with some uncertainty. "Are we allowed to sit here?" I asked. They hesitatingly nodded and moved over. But then I saw a small plaque that read: *orelist*. What does that mean? I wondered. Oh, wait a minute, it means "organist." Sure enough, not far to my left a lady was playing the organ. I decided that she probably was the children's mother. We decided to move to the front a bit more where there were some vacant spaces. From there we saw that tables covered with white cloths

signalled that this service would include the celebration of the Lord's Supper, which is done only four times a year. The bread and wine were covered by another white cloth.

Soon after we had settled in, the consistory door opened and about 20 stout male Afrikaners marched out and sat all around us, next to their waiting wives. The service was ready to begin. The pastor took about 10 minutes making various announcements. Then he pronounced the greeting. The congregation took it in sitting down. The pastor next read the Apostles' Creed. Everyone listened passively while seated. Even though the creed says "I believe," it was only the pastor that spoke out loud that he believes "a holy catholic Church." It sounded strange to me, but I reminded myself that this is how we used to do it in the church of my youth – in the *Gereformeerde Kerk* of Joure. The pastor always spoke on our behalf. Next, the pastor announced a psalm and we all joined the loud organ in praising God. This time we stood. Finally. Something is demanded of us.

After singing we sat down. Wait a minute, why are the men not sitting down? All of sudden it dawned on me. Of course, sixty years ago when men remained standing it meant we were going to pray. I immediately rose and with a chuckle in my throat I joined the gender-specific body in the congregational prayer. I sensed that Alice would not like this ritual, but I thoroughly enjoyed this wrinkle in time as I imagined myself back in the church of my youth with the pastor taking us through a lengthy ritual of praise, thanks and petition. I no longer saw it with the eyes and ears of a 21st-century post-modern believer. Somehow I felt the way I felt then – this had nothing to do with male superiority; this was the proper thing to do.

That was not the way Alice took it, I found out later. First of all she found herself surrounded by a wall of towering, broad shouldered, stomach-bulging men. You must know that a lot of Afrikaner men are big, solid and well-fed. Secondly, she immediately experienced it as a male dominating act. After I sat down, she whispered, "Next time the women should all stand and the men remain seated." Well, there were two more times of prayer and male domination after that, but I blithely slipped back into my youth and joined the men.

The scripture reading took place next, followed by the sermon. The sermon was based on 1 Corinthians 1:25 –

"For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength." Was this a rebuke by God of our standing up? I wondered.

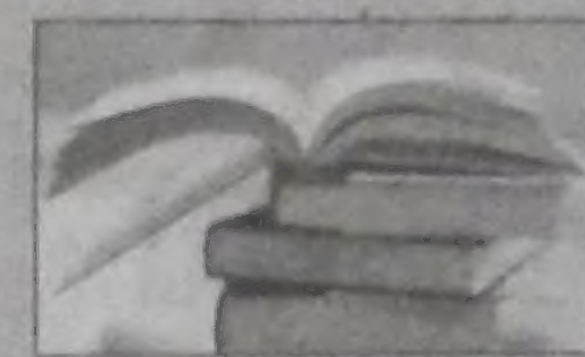
After the sermon we celebrated the Lord's Supper, and all those who were "Gereformeerde" people in good standing were welcome. So much for "I believe a holy catholic Church, the communion of saints." But then, that's how we did it in the 1940s. The first shift of communicants took their seats at the front tables. Just like the olden days. Alice and I joined the first group, although Alice hesitated because it seemed too presumptuous. The first "table" consisted mostly of elders and their wives. "This first table is for the elders," she whispered, as we sat facing the pastor. "That's alright," I replied. "I'm an elder at Jubilee back home."

There were five shifts, five Lord's Suppers, five times the breaking of the bread and the pouring of the wine. I must say, the pastor did it all with equal enthusiasm and dignity. The wine was real wine, not the surrogate grape juice we dip our bread in at Jubilee. Everyone took a sip, some two sips, from a common chalice. That's real communion, I would say. You could tell it was real wine because a lot of people coughed after alcohol hit their vocal cords. A psalm verse was sung at the table, and another while people left and another group came. All in all, the celebration lasted a full hour, just like old times. But I was strangely edified by it all. There was quiet beauty in the deliberate pace, and the time of refection on the part of those who sat through five *nagmaals*. The collection was at the door, after which we joined others in drinking coffee. We had a good conversation with an elderly couple – they talked Afrikaans and we talked Dutch.

We also met the pastor. I asked him, "I know I used to do this back in Holland, but why are the men standing during prayer and why are the women sitting down?" He smiled and admitted that he had never given this matter a thought before. "I grew up with it," he said. "Maybe it has something to do with men being the head of the family." I suspect he was right, although, when I did it back in Holland, I was a teenager, not the head of a family. You could say I was a head in training.

Back in the car later on, I thought, "When I stood up during prayer in the '40s, I liked it because it made me feel grown up. Younger boys would not have been expected to stand up. It was a rite of passage. There's nothing wrong with that, is there?" Just a few days before that I had given a talk on sex and sexuality to a group of Grade 10, 11 and 12 students. I had quoted Jim Olthuis's statement in one of his books that a woman talks like a woman, walks like a woman, thinks like a woman, feels like a woman, buys like a woman and paints like a woman. A man does all these things like a man. I had used the French expression regarding men and women "Vive la difference." So why shouldn't a man pray like a man – standing up?

During my reflection Alice was quiet. Suddenly she piped up, "I know why." "You do?" "Yes. Men pee standing up and women pee sitting down." It took me a while to absorb that profound observation. But then I nodded. "I think you're on to something, Alice. We're talking

The Christian Courier
Short Story Contest!

I: Send in your original, short fiction (1000 to 3000 words) on any theme. First prize receives \$100 and publication in a summer issue of *Christian Courier*. Second prize receives a year's subscription. Stories must be submitted electronically to brett@christiancourier.ca by June 15, 2010. Entries over the word limit will not be considered.

II: Our readers 7 to 14 years of age can participate in the category for youth. Send your short stories (under 1000 words) to Brett Dewing at brett@christiancourier.ca before June 15, 2010. The two best submissions will win a gift certificate to Toys'R'Us, valued at \$50 (first place) and \$25 (second place). All stories will be considered for publication in CC.

about a creation structure. If only our churches in Canada would hold on to the days of old."

I kind of modified that opinion a few hours later as we sat in our room and I read the news bulletin of the church we had visited. At the bottom right corner of the first page we read: *Attendance at the service on February 21, 2010: first service: members 66 % (190 members); baptized members 43% (36 members); second service: members 13 % (38 members); baptized members: 3% (3 members).* "Wow they actually count the attendance every Sunday," I said to Alice. She was not surprised. She had seen one of the elders counting attendance at the Lord's Supper that morning.

Maybe the old ways are not always better, I thought. Checking attendance every Sunday sounds too much like external pressure and behaviourism. And I do think every believer should stand up and say, "I believe in God the Father, maker of heaven and earth." For the rest, let the women sit down during prayer while the men stand up, if only to declare that women are, after all, women, and men are men.



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News

Canada continued to shine at Paralympic games

Rebecca Lindell

VANCOUVER, B.C. — With a record number of medals, sold-out events and unparalleled attendance, members of the Paralympic movement are calling the Vancouver Games the “best ever.”

“What a blast we’ve had,” Sir Philip Craven, the president of the International Paralympic Committee, shouted out to the cheering crowds at the closing ceremonies. “The best Paralympic Winter Games ever!”

It certainly was for Canada in terms of medal count. Canadian athletes brought home 19 medals, breaking the previous record of 15

set in Salt Lake City and Nagano. The new record had Canada tied for third place overall with Ukraine. Russia took the top spot with 38 medals, followed by Germany’s 24 medals.

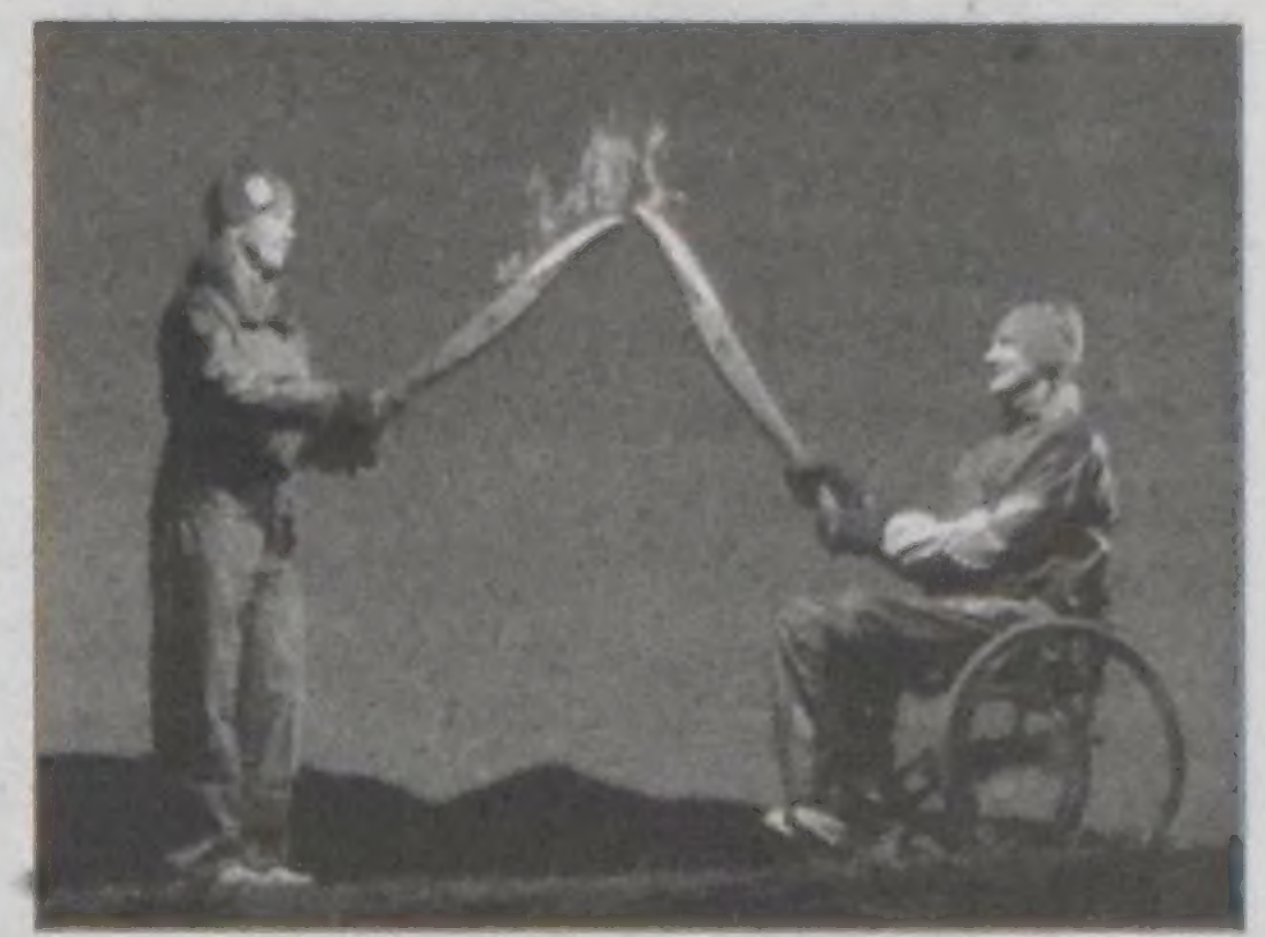
It wasn’t all golden for the home team. In a major upset, Canada lost its top spot in sledge hockey. The Canadian sledge hockey team, which won gold in 2006, lost to Japan, sending the team to the bronze medal game where they lost to Norway.

Gold fever

Losses on the ice were made up by success on the snow. Three Canadians alone won a

total of 13 medals. Twenty-eight-year-old alpine skier Lauren Woolstencroft, who was born without legs and races while wearing two prosthetics, won an astounding five gold medals. Visually-impaired skier Brian McKeever won three gold medals in nordic events and rookie winter athlete Viviane Forest, a visually impaired alpine skier, won medals in all five of her races.

“Lauren, Brian and Viviane, you are Canada’s newest heroes,” said John Furlong, CEO of the Vancouver Organizing Committee, at the closing ceremonies of the Games held in Whistler on March 21.



The ten-day sports extravaganza closed with intimate and casual ceremonies featuring performances by songwriter Chantal Kreviazuk, folk band La Bottine Souriante, Inuit throat singer Tanya Tagaq and a dance troupe called Soul Funktion, but the main focus of the ceremonies was celebrating the achievements in action.

“Paralympians you have dazzled us with your agility, your strength, your endurance, your sportsmanship,” Furlong said. “Many of you will go home as champions; you all go home as winners.”

The Paralympic Movement itself won big during these Games with record attendance and media coverage.

“There was a fusion of spirit between the spectators and the athletes, spectators who supported all nations with just a slight emphasis on Go Canada Go,” Craven said.

Media outlets report that 230,000 tickets were sold, which is about 85 per cent of those available, making it the most successful Winter Paralympic Games ever.

More equitable coverage

Some of the hottest Paralympic events were the closing ceremony, the Canadian sledge hockey games and the gold medal sledge hockey game, all of which were sold out nearly a week before the Games began.

“People are pretty focused on the Olympic Games leading up to and throughout the Olympics and as soon as the Olympics are over, people wake up and say, ‘I want to do that again,’ and the Paralympics become the focus,” said VANOC’s vice-president of ticketing and consumer marketing, Caley Denton.

VANOC opened ticket sales nearly a year before the event, earlier than at any other Games, based on the request of Canadians who wanted to attend the event, Denton said.

The earlier release of the tickets coincides with what Blair McIntosh of the Canadian Paralympic Committee described as a more equitable marketing campaign between the Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Games.

“That’s huge for our movement. It’s something that’s never happened before,” McIntosh said.

The Games received a record level of television coverage with 25 broadcast hours in French and English.

Rebecca Lindell is a journalism student at the University of British Columbia. She lives in Vancouver.

Discover the world of free software

I regularly don’t pay for my software. To be clear, I must emphasize that I do not steal software nor do I condone software piracy. Instead, I am talking about free and “open source” software which is freely distributed and for which copying is encouraged. In fact, all the software I am using to write this article is free software, including the OpenOffice word processor and the Linux operating system.

Free and open source software provides an alternative model to the traditional commercial or “proprietary” software model. Proprietary software is normally sold without the “source code,” which is the language in which the program is actually written. This has been compared to buying a car with the hood welded shut. In this way, companies keep the inner workings of their program secret to protect their product and prevent others from copying it. Although this protects the intellectual property of the company, it is a disadvantage for end users who are dependent on the company’s effective monopoly on any software fixes, updates, or enhancements.

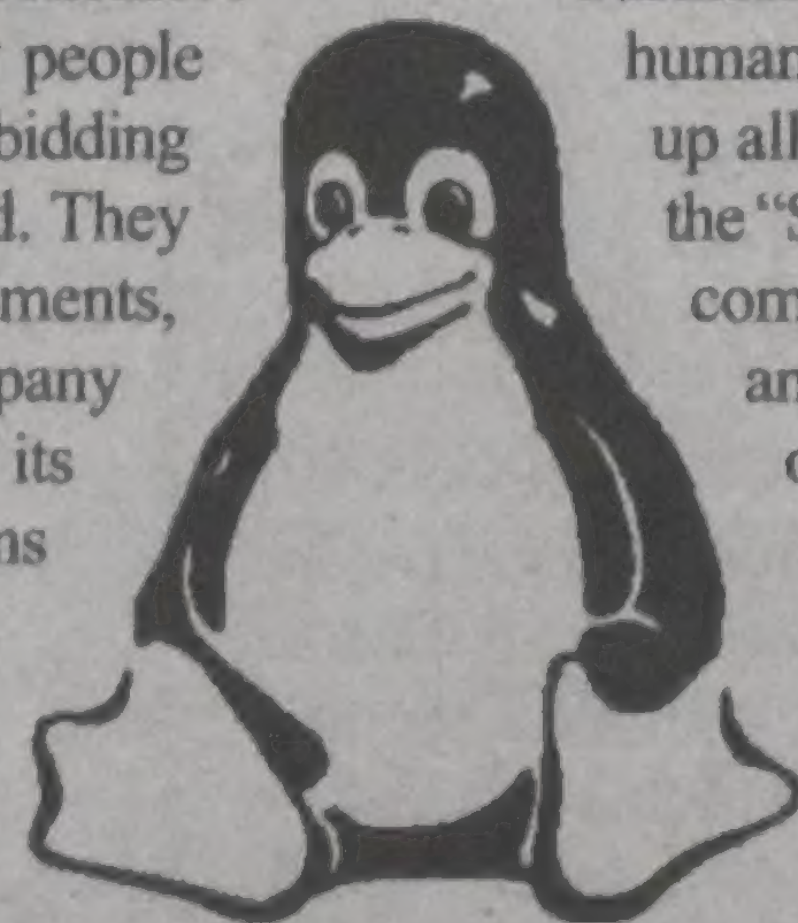
Proprietary software typically comes with a comprehensive EULA (End-User Licensing Agreement), which few people bother to read. These EULAs usually include clauses forbidding the software from being copied or reverse-engineered. They also typically include broad limitation of liability statements, which basically remove any responsibilities the company may have to ensure the software works in terms of its “merchantability or fitness for any purpose.” Criticisms about proprietary software often point out that this limits the rights of users while simultaneously limiting the responsibilities of the company.

The cathedral and the bazaar

In recent years, a vast amount of high-quality free software has been developed, ranging from free operating systems and word processors to software to power devices like web phones. Free software is an idea supported by a loose-knit global network of individual programmers from around the world who give their code away for free. In this paradigm, the intellectual property rights are set aside for the advantage of copying, sharing, and collaborating.

Richard Stallman, founder of the Free Software Foundation, is widely regarded as the philosopher of the free software movement. In his words, “free software” is a matter of liberty, not price. To understand the concept, you should think of “free” as in “freedom,” not as in “free beer.” He argues that “free software” refers to four kinds of freedom:

- 1) The freedom to run the program, for any purpose.
- 2) The freedom to study how the program works, and adapt it to your needs.
- 3) The freedom to redistribute copies so you can help your neighbour.
- 4) The freedom to improve the program and release your improvements to the public, so that the whole community benefits.



Tux, the official mascot of the Linux operating system.

The second freedom is appealing for hobbyists and academics in computing who can collaborate and disseminate new software ideas. In academia, innovation depends on shared knowledge, standards and collaboration. An essay entitled *The Cathedral and the Bazaar* compares the development models of proprietary vs. open source software and asserts that the open source model results in better quality software because of the massive peer review it solicits.

Copyleft?

Why do people make free software? How do they get paid? Like artists, programmers enjoy what they do. Some contributions to free software come from individuals and others come from computer manufacturers and large companies like IBM, RedHat and Google. Other software is funded by donations to foundations or contributed by researchers in universities.

One important question is whether open source software is anti-business. Business, like all spheres, has a legitimate place in human activities. As it turns out, open source software opens up all kinds of interesting business models. One example is the “Software-as-a-Service” (SaaS) business model, in which companies help create free software but charge for service and support. Other companies have built other services on top of free software (examples of this include Google and various social networking sites and many web hosting companies).

The free software movement has turned the notion of copyright upside down by defining something called “copyleft.” Copyleft uses copyright law to protect free software. Under copyleft, the developer copyrights the program and releases it under a licensing agreement that requires all modified versions of the program to remain free as well.

The open source paradigm has many aspects with which Christians can sympathize. The notion of “helping your neighbour” is a powerful concept when software can be duplicated with ease. The notion of common grace is evident in the delightful software that is created and shared by a diverse community of people collaborating from around the world. Augustine talked about the “treasures of the Egyptians” that the people of Israel took with them and likened them to the good things in culture developed by unbelievers. Open source software provides an opportunity for Christians to use these “treasures” in service to God. Christians can contribute to shaping software that can help care for the earth and show love for our neighbours by sharing useful tools that open up their workspace.

Dr. Derek Schuurman (dschuur@csredeemer.ca) is a Computer Science professor at Redeemer University College. He is a fan of open source software and the free Linux operating system.



Technically Speaking

Derek Schuurman

News

Reflections on recent elections in the Netherlands

Koen Zondag

AMSTERDAM – On March 3, the results of the municipal elections in the Netherlands became evident throughout the evening. Actually, the elections were not about local governance. After the fall of the Balkenende cabinet (a coalition of Christian Democrats, socialists and the Christian Historical Union) necessitated national elections (to be held June 9), it was all about national political power struggles.

The trend was clear: the municipal elections showed a significant loss of votes for the Christian Democrats, the Socialists and another (more extreme) socialist party. This was accompanied by a big gain for the liberals and the PVV (Freedom Party), a one-issue, anti-Islamic, party without membership, led by populist Geert Wilders.



Wilders

It's not at all unthinkable that on June 9 a number of parties (the Christian Democrats, Liberals, Socialists and "Wilderianen") will be nearly equally large.

For strategic reasons, Wilders participated in the municipal elections in only two cities. His success was impressive: in Almere the PVV became the largest party, and in The Hague, the second-largest.

How is it possible that Christian democrats and Socialists (or Christian Democrats and Liberals), who for decades garnered enough votes to collectively form a cabinet – sometimes with the help of smaller parties – now are not able to gain the support of one-third of the electorate? How is it possible that people from all walks of life, from former socialists to evangelical Christians, are voting for Geert Wilders? Is it because of his message that the Netherlands must be protected from what he sees as a constantly growing Islamization?

Wilders is a great speaker and debater, who almost always succeeds in catching the attention of the media. But certainly that can't be the reason that on June 9 his will probably become the largest party in the Netherlands? According to me, the causes lie elsewhere.

What the economic crisis symbolizes

The leaders of the Christian Democrats and the Socialists, not only in the Netherlands

but also outside of it, and especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall, were of the opinion that capitalism was so filled with blessings that they fully embraced the market concept. Efficiency became more important than servitude; the system trumped humanity, and the citizen became the customer. Something else was added. Word usage by politicians changed. They didn't speak from the heart anymore; they merely repeated their mantras. The world-view of Jan Peter Balkenende, for example, the leader of the Christian Democrats, is limited to financial and economic concerns, and the leader of the Socialists, Wouter Bos, shows little consistency in his viewpoints. No wonder that in such a vacuum of leadership a populist receives not only attention but also a following.

The time has come for moral leadership. In connection with this I point to an article by Lans Bovenberg, professor of economics at the University of Tilburg and Hermann Wijffels, former CEO at the Rabo bank (he



was the architect of the cabinet that recently fell). In the last issue of *Christen Democratische Verkenning*, the publication of the Christian Democrats, they state, correctly, I think, that the current economic crisis is a symptom of a deeper cultural crisis. People have stepped beyond their boundaries. It's about rediscovering an appreciation for stewardship and virtue, putting limits to specialization and pleading for parallel development of private and communal interest.

Those politicians who are courageous

enough to follow this path will pursue radical politics. They will search for the radix, the root, the essence of human existence. In clear and moving words they will voice their concerns. If they succeed, Geert Wilders will be shocked to discover that his story is merely a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

Koen Zondag was a research officer for bilingualism and bilingual education. He lives in the Netherlands.

School kids learn about cows, bees and slaughtered lambs

How do you teach school kids about the origin of some foods, such as meat, when some concerned parents and kids don't want to know that lambs, piglets, hens and calves will eventually go to a slaughterhouse? Should children be taught about where meat comes from, or is it better that they come to realize the realities of rearing and slaughter later in life?

Grade 5 children in Renfrew County learn a little about farm animals when they attend the one-day Farm Comes to Town held annually at the Renfrew Armories.

This month is the 18th year for the program, which was started by the Renfrew County Agri-Food Education. About 400 kids attend the event each year. They get to see live animals such as beef, dairy, hogs, sheep, and poultry. They also see Holstein and Jersey cows being milked and sheep being shorn. Farmers (farm teachers) man the booths that house the animals for the day. There is also a bee keeping booth and a soil and crop display. Some kids are shocked when they learn that the cute lambs will be going to slaughter and that the baby bull beef calf will be fattened up and made into steaks and roasts. There is also an evening program for the general public, which is always well attended.

Teachers and students are asked to fill in a questionnaire to let the organizers know what needs to be changed. Kids don't like hearing about animals going to slaughter. Organizers of the event say there hasn't been any concerns or complaints from parents. I looked at a class report from a few years ago when I was involved in the event.

Becky wrote: "Never talk about the slaughter house to us kids who care about animals."

Jesse wrote: "They only keep chickens until they stop laying eggs, then they get slaughtered."

James wrote: I learned how old pigs have to be when they are slotered."

British teacher fired after sending pet sheep to slaughter

Last month the British media reported that a teacher in London has resigned after



Marcus

she shocked students by sending Marcus, their pet sheep, to slaughter. Here's what I pieced together after reading different media reports on the case.

Head teacher Andrea Charman wanted to teach the children a little about farming and where their food comes from. The school is in Kent County, England on Romney Marsh, a farming community famous for sheep farming. She set up a school farm with rabbits, cockerels, guinea pigs and three orphaned lambs, which the kids helped feed.

She asked the pupil-run school council, which was made up of 14 seven to 11 year-olds, what should be done with the maturing lambs. The student council voted 13-1 to slaughter one of them – a neutered male – and sell the meat by raffle in the town. The money would be used by the school to buy and raise some pigs. The school governors backed the plan. The sheep was sent to slaughter. Some parents were hopping mad and soon Charman was subjected to abuse on the Internet. Nearly 2,500 people signed an online petition demanding she be fired. Imagine!

The community defended the slaughter, saying the aim was to educate children about the food cycle.

But animal lovers said it was "heartless" for the children to be allowed to hand-rear the sheep, give it a name and then learn it was to be killed.

So after Charman refused to back down, more than 650 people joined a Facebook group entitled Ban Andrea Charman from Teaching Anywhere. Soon after that, Kent county council announced she had resigned for "personal reasons."

A mother at the school complained that it was a 'disgrace' that the sheep fed by hand by her eight-year old daughter should be slaughtered.

She said: "I feel this is the same as my daughter coming home from school to find her pet rabbit bubbling away on the stove in a stew."

You can bet the school rabbits are safe for now.

Maynard van der Galien (maynard@renfrew.net) is a farmer and agricultural writer in eastern Ontario. He volunteered at Farm Comes to Town for 14 years.



Country living

Maynard van der Galien



Church

CRC online network is taking off

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – The conversation has started and connections have been made over the last month since the launch of The Network, a new website for Christian Reformed Church members to link with each other about the nuts and bolts of doing ministry.

“Over the first four weeks, we had about 7,000 visits and 48,000 page views,” says Tim Postuma, web manager for the CRC. “As search engines pick up the site, that will continue to increase. It’s interesting that each visit lasts, on average, about three times as long as a typical visit to the CRCNA site website. Visitors have added over 400 comments and discussion topics.”

The Network is a practical tool for people to learn about ministry topics in which they have an interest. Users can also discuss a variety of ministry-related issues, currently 44 ministry roles and topics.

“We have found that The Network resonates with people,” says Michael Bruinooge, its director. “They’re also interacting with us and giving us good feedback about what to add or change.”

That input has already resulted in new features, including the option for users to see who else in their church is using The Network. Another popular feature has been the ability for people to log in using their existing accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Google or other services. Overall, the website is part of a broader effort to connect members and churches in new ways.

Some current Guided Network topics:

Should Christians Use Credit Cards? (Stewardship network)
Low and Irregular Attendance (Sunday School network)
Diversity, Multiculturalism: What does it mean? (Racial Reconciliation network)
Lessons Learned from Google Buzz (Church and Web network)
Pastoral Care for those “Living Together” (Elders network)
Abuse Awareness Event (Safe Church network)
Music-Dominated Worship (Worship network)

An ‘open system’ that will grow, adapt

“I feel very pleased at what The Network exemplifies and how it has been built,” Bruinooge says. “I definitely see this as an open system that will grow and adapt.” That is already happening.

All of the sub-networks within The Network have open discussion forums in which people may ask questions, share stories or give input to each other. However, 10 of them are “Guided Networks”; they are led by volunteer experts in a given area and offer articles, resources and a blog written by the guide.

Church members who serve as deacons, who would like to be, or who just want to know what a deacon does have a guided site in which to learn about what is involved in that church office and what deacons can, and do, face. There is also discussion forum for those who are interested in discussing issues related to Ministry Associates.

Church members interested in issues related to being an elder or serving as a missionary have also been using The Network. In some cases, people share information about things that work at their church – in Sunday School, in adult classes, in ministry that engages with the community. Along these lines, The Network is starting to show its potential as an on-line tool to help unite congregations across the continent and have them share best practices. “The Network represents a new way of being a denomination together,” asserts Bruinooge.

The site can be visited at www.crcna.org/network where a computer user can browse the various networks, watch a 5-minute video introduction and read more about this effort.

“Since the value is in the connections, participation is key,” says Postuma. “Our primary challenge will be to nurture this in such a way that when ministry questions come up, people think of going online to get help from others in the Network community.”

Palestinian Authority shuts down the only Christian TV broadcaster in the area

BETHLEHEM, Israel (AsiaNews) – The Palestinian National Authority has shut down Al-Mahed “Nativity” TV for operating without a licence. Samir Qumsieh, owner and general manager of the Christian broadcaster, slammed the decision.

After 14 years on the air and despite a long list of “thank you letters” by grateful viewers, Palestinian police raided the broadcaster’s offices one afternoon in mid-March. Waving an order by the Interior Ministry, they put the station off the air. Contacted by AsiaNews, Qumsieh said he was baffled by the order, which for him was “unjustified.”

Located on high ground 350 metres from the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem, Al-Mahed “Nativity” TV was for years the “only Christian voice” among Palestinian media. It broadcast programs in a variety of genres and subject areas, from education to the environment, politics, local culture and society, as well as masses, prayers and the most important celebrations on the Christian liturgical calendar. Its audience was primarily Christian but included Muslims as well.



Al-Mahed “Nativity” TV Station is located on a high cliff 350 meters away from the Church of Nativity.

According to unconfirmed reports the closure appears to be financially motivated. Palestinian authorities demanded money, the “licence” that was not paid and which amounted to asking for a bribe. In a letter addressed to

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, Samir Qumsieh pointed out that 14 years of broadcasting had earned the station the gratitude of viewers as demonstrated by the many thank you letters and e-mails, worthy of a “Guinness world record.”

In his letter he said that he “would not beg” to have the station re-opened. The “ingratitude” shown to him is “unacceptable by any religion, logic or conscience,” he believes.

Canadian Anglican Catholics request unity with Rome

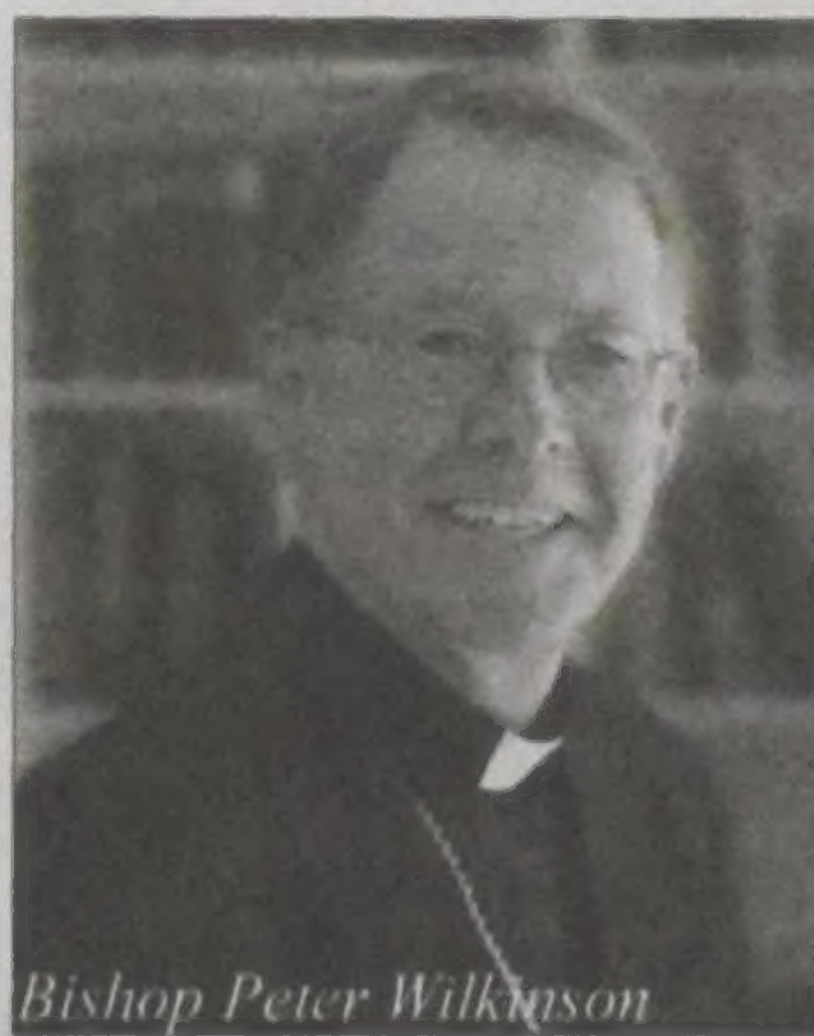
Marian Van Til, with files from Women of Grace, Anglican Essentials

OTTAWA – The House of Bishops of the Canadian province of the Traditional Anglican Communion (the Anglican Catholic Church in Canada) last month requested official unity with the Roman Catholic Church. Anglican Catholics in Canada split from the worldwide Anglican Communion in the 1970s primarily over the issue of ordaining women.

In a letter dated March 12 sent to William Cardinal Levada, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Catholic bishops said they “seek a communal and ecclesial way of being Anglican Catholics in communion with the

Holy See, at once treasuring the full expression of Catholic faith and treasuring our tradition within which we have come to this moment.”

The letter was signed by the Rt. Rev. Peter D. Wilkinson OSG of Victoria, as well as two suffragan bishops for different regions, Bishop Craig Botterill and Bishop Carl Reid.



Bishop Peter Wilkinson

A larger church in disarray

Bishop Wilkinson explained on his website, “It is no secret that now ‘Our Anglican Heritage’ – the Catholic

Faith as we have received it – means different things to different people, especially in this time of great confusion when the Canterbury Impaired Communion is in such doctrinal and moral disarray, and many other Anglican groups are struggling, sometimes against one another, to make sense of what has happened.”

Wilkinson continued, “It seems to me that in the last quarter of the 20th century the Anglican Communion, despite all its fine ecumenical words, decided to become just another liberal protestant denomination. But that is not how we, who have been baptized into Christ’s Holy Catholic Church, as the Catechism teaches, have learned Christ.”

The Anglican Catholic Church of which Wilkinson is a part has some 400,000 members. The church sent a letter to the Holy See in Rome in October 2007 asking for full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. They declared their adherence to Catholic doctrine but expressed a desire to keep distinct Anglican traditions. In July 2008, Rome said was considering the request. In 2009, Cardinal William Levada (head of Rome’s Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith) announced Pope Benedict’s desire to create a way for these Anglican groups to enter into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. How they could do that was set out late last year in a document called *Anglicanorum Coetibus*.

The request by Canadian Anglican Catholics was made on the heels of the same move by the Anglican Church in America. That church announced on March 3 that they had formally requested implementation of *Anglicanorum Coetibus* in the United States.

Hispanics now make up one-third of U.S. Catholics

HARTFORD, Connecticut (CatholicCulture.org) – The percentage of Catholics in the United States who are Hispanic has increased to 32 percent from 20 percent in 1990, according to a new study by the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture at Trinity College. But only 60 percent of Latinos in the U.S. now identify themselves as Catholic – down from 66 percent in 1990.

“Latinos have become less identified with Christianity” in general, the study found. In 1990, 91 percent of Latinos identified themselves as Christian. Now, 20 years later, that percentage has fallen to 82. “But other religions and faiths

have failed to attract Latinos,” says the study. “Mirroring the overall national trend [in the U.S., Canada and Europe], there has been a significant jump in the number and percentage of ‘Nones,’ – the so-called “no-religion population.”

“Whereas Latino immigrants are contributing significantly to the stability of American Catholicism, the younger generation and the U.S.-born population are tending to polarize between those moving away from religion and those moving towards conservative Christian traditions,” the study found.

Education

German homeschooling family seeks asylum in Canada

Patrick B. Craine

OTTAWA, Ont. (LifeSiteNews.com) – A German homeschooling family is seeking asylum in Canada after fleeing their native country due to persecution, reports the *Globe and Mail*.

The family will make their plea on Tuesday in a closed hearing before the Alberta Immigration and Refugee board. They say that they would be persecuted in Germany for homeschooling, based on the German law that forbids homeschooling with little exception. Parents who violate the law have faced hefty fines, as well as imprisonment and state seizure of their children.

While many choose to homeschool for religious reasons, these parents, who do not wish to be identified, say rather that they wish to homeschool as a matter of conscience and for the medical well-being of their two teenage sons. The boys both suffer from various illnesses after having been born four months premature.

The government had placed them in a school for the physically and mentally disabled, but the parents felt that they would not receive the best education there, so they chose to homeschool.

After battles with the government, they were permitted to homeschool in 2006, supported by a state teacher. The teacher later informed the parents that she would be leaving at the end of the school year, and advised them to leave the country. Then, two days later, the police presented the family with a government letter telling them to enroll their children in school for the next year or they would be taken away.

After hiding in Germany for three months, they went to Denmark, where they got in touch with the Home School Legal Defense Association, which helped bring them to Canada in April 2007.

The German law forbidding homeschooling was established by the Nazis in 1938. The law has been upheld in recent years by the courts, and in 2006, the country's highest criminal court ruled that the government could seize children whose parents attempt to homeschool on the basis of conscience. The European Court of Human Rights also upheld the law in 2006.

The German government's persecution of homeschoolers made headlines in January after a U.S. judge granted asylum to the Romeikes, a family who had fled to the U.S. in August 2008. "The rights being violated here are basic human rights that no country has a right to violate," wrote Immigration Judge Lawrence O. Burman. "Homeschoolers are a particular social group that the German government is trying to suppress. This family has a well-founded fear of persecution...therefore, they are eligible for asylum...and the court will grant asylum."

Canadian Member of Parliament Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon-Wanuskewin, CPC) has decried the German law, and called on the Alberta board to protect the rights of this family.

"Canada has a strong legacy of parental rights and home schooling has been an accepted expression of these rights in Canada," he said. "I commend these valiant parents for the commitment and devotion they have to the best interests of their children. I hope the Immigration and Refugee Board in Alberta gives a favourable hearing to this case."

The mother told the *Globe and Mail* that her boys are thriving in Alberta. "For us, it's a gift, a real gift to be able to homeschool our children," she said.

Patrick Craine resides in Halifax with his wife Jenna and son Noah. He is a freelance writer pursuing an M.A. in Philosophy.

Redeemer, Kings on top of university list in student satisfaction

Marian Van Til, with files from CUSC and Macleans

OTTAWA – The Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC) publishes an annual study of undergraduate students that focuses on student satisfaction with the universities they attend. The 2009 survey included participation by students from 34 Canadian universities. More than 12,000 students about to graduate from their respective schools responded to questions in the CUSC's online survey. The results were released earlier this year.

It is noteworthy that two small universities founded by Reformed people – most of them members of the Christian Reformed Church – topped the list for student satisfaction. The King's University College (Edmonton) and Redeemer University College (Ancaster, Ontario) earned highest satisfaction levels in the two main categories of the survey: students' satisfaction with the quality of teaching they received and students' satisfaction with their decision to attend that university.

Under "Generally, I am satisfied with the quality of the teaching I received," 75 percent of surveyed students at The King's "agreed strongly" while the remaining 25 percent "agreed." Fifty-nine percent of surveyed Redeemer students "strongly agreed" to that question, while nearly all of the remaining surveyed Redeemer students fell into the "agreed" category (40 per cent).

In regards to students' "satisfaction with [their] decision to attend this university," 67 percent of surveyed students from The King's were "very satisfied," and an additional 29 percent were "satisfied," numbers which account for 96 percent of surveyed King's students. For Redeemer, 64 percent said they were "very satisfied" and 32 percent were "satisfied," also for a total of 96 per cent of surveyed Redeemer students.

The level of satisfaction both The King's and Redeemer students had with their education was substantially higher than that of students attending most of the other 32 academic institutions involved in the survey. The list included universities such as McGill, Wilfred Laurier, Carlton, Simon Fraser, UBC (Vancouver), Ottawa, Calgary, Dalhousie and Ryerson. (Those last two have not publicly released the results of their students' responses.)

Another of the Christian institutions, Trinity Western, also did well in student satisfaction. Fifty-eight percent of Trinity Western's surveyed students were "very satisfied" with their decision to go there, while an additional 38 percent were "satisfied." Twenty-six percent of Trinity Western students were "very satisfied" with the quality of their education, while an additional 42 percent were "satisfied."

Atheist club encourages students to swap Bibles for porn

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (ChristianPost) – For three days last month members of the Atheist Agenda at the University of Texas San Antonio (UTSA) gave students pornographic magazines in exchange for Bible and any "religious" books as part of their annual "Smut for Smut" campaign.



The Atheist Agenda table at the UTSA.

Leaders of the atheist group argue that religious books contain violence, spark religious wars, advocate for the mistreatment of women and are therefore no better than pornography. "It's a [Constitutional] First Amendment right," said Atheist Agenda member Bradley Lewis, 18. He told the *San Antonio Express-News*, "If religious groups can put out missionaries and go knock on my door and wake me up at 7 a.m. on a Saturday morning, I can put a table outside of the college."

As expected, the group's action offended the many Christian students at UTSA. A large group of Christians gathered to protest the event and in the afternoon a Christian student debated the Atheist Agenda president Carlos Morales.

The event attracted hundreds of students – many of them Christians – to the university's main plaza. Some were seen carrying signs with messages such as "Jesus Saves" and "Jesus loves the Atheist Agenda," while others sang hymns, according to the UTSA student newspaper *The Paisano*.

Robin Lorkovic, 18, held a sign that said, "God Loves You! Keep your Bible and learn from it!" She said, "I am a Christian. I believe in God's love and I am here to stand my ground and stand up for what I believe in."

University officials admit that the atheist event is controversial and that the majority of students don't agree with it. But they also said the event is legal and students have the right to freedom of speech and assembly. "They [the Atheist Agenda] admitted it's a publicity stunt," said Michelle Brossart, a UTSA student who is offended by the event. "They want to evoke crazy emotions out of people because they want to make their agenda known. But only very, very few people are actually gaining anything from this."

Atheist Agenda began the "Smut for Smut" campaign on the campus in 2005. Its first campaign gained major media attention across the nation. Subsequent events have also attracted national coverage in the U.S., but to a lesser extent.

Calvin and Trinity colleges named to service honour roll

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, and Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, have each been named to the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. The honour roll is the highest federal recognition an American college or university can receive for its commitment to volunteering, service-learning and civic engagement. It honours colleges and universities across the U.S. for such service and engagement with their communities.

Last year 750 Trinity students volunteered more than 8,000 hours through the college's Office of Community Partnerships, student service efforts and classroom-related service opportunities.

Calvin College logged more than 40,000 service-learning hours this past academic year, an increase of nearly 14 per cent over the previous year.

Honorees are chosen based on the scope and innovation of service projects, the percentage of students participating in service activities, incentives for service and the extent to which the college or university offers academically based service-learning courses.

Church funds

Paying the pastor

Ellen Vanderwerf

In response to some reader inquiries, the *Christian Courier* has asked me to tackle this delicate subject.

Larger churches seem to have no difficulty paying a whole staff of various types of pastors who work together to help us run our churches. However, the smaller churches tend to have a much more difficult time paying a pastor the going rate.

It can get local councils wondering about a lot of things. In their fear, they might begin to run their church like a business. Perhaps they begrudge having to pay someone so much money. They may sadly be scratching programs off next year's list of church activities in order to save money. They may wonder if their congregation can be an effective member of the body of Christ if their church budget only meets their local commitments, giving none to outreach. They might be questioning the necessity of our educational process and preparation of pastors, wondering if those long years of study are why hiring a pastor costs so much. And, sadly, they also might be wondering how to simplify matters by attracting members with fuller pockets.

It got me thinking about church: about church programs and activities that cost a lot of money, about whether it is wise for a church to hire a pastor if they can't afford the going rate. It got me thinking about my own experiences with various types of church councils when discussing the wage they would pay my husband.

What is the church?

As I read some questions put forward by one church elder, I was most touched and saddened by this part of the letter: "We have to look for members among doctors, lawyers and rich farmers to survive! Is that the crowd that Christ spent his time courting? If our budget is solely dedicated to ourselves and none to outreach, are we an effective member of the body of Christ? Are we not merely a Christian Social Club with exorbitant dues?"

My thoughts began to run to what I believe church is. Thinking back to Acts, when did money become such a priority for churches? How would the richer member feel if they

believed they were only embraced within their church because of their money? What if poorer members believed they were of little value because they cannot contribute significant money to outreach? What is church really supposed to be anyway, when you take away culturally accepted identity details about church?

I have a pretty good idea what it isn't:

It isn't about how much money you can donate to a worthy cause.

It isn't even just about serving your neighbour...I know, this one is a toughie, but think about it: at the root of it, the relationship with God comes first, and all else flows out of this.

It isn't an expensive social club, best manned by the people who grew up in it and understand the culture.

It isn't about running all the popular study programs.

It isn't about building the perfect church building.

It isn't about knowing the best songs or having the best worship team.

And it certainly isn't about hiring someone else to be your professional sermon-writer, thought-thinker, person-visitor, program-runner, study-teacher, wrist-slapper, back-patter, special-service-officiator, deep-book-reader, pep-rally-runner.

What is a Christian?

Church is an organization of people who believe the same things. If the Christian church is simply a group of Christians, then my root question becomes, what is a Christian?

I can think of a lot of things a Christian isn't:

A Christian isn't there to take care of everybody who needs help.

A Christian isn't there just to give you money when you need some.

A Christian isn't there to volunteer to run your church programs and activities.

A Christian isn't merely someone who attends church or was raised in one.

A Christian isn't there to have a perfect body, perfect morals, perfect health and a nice house.

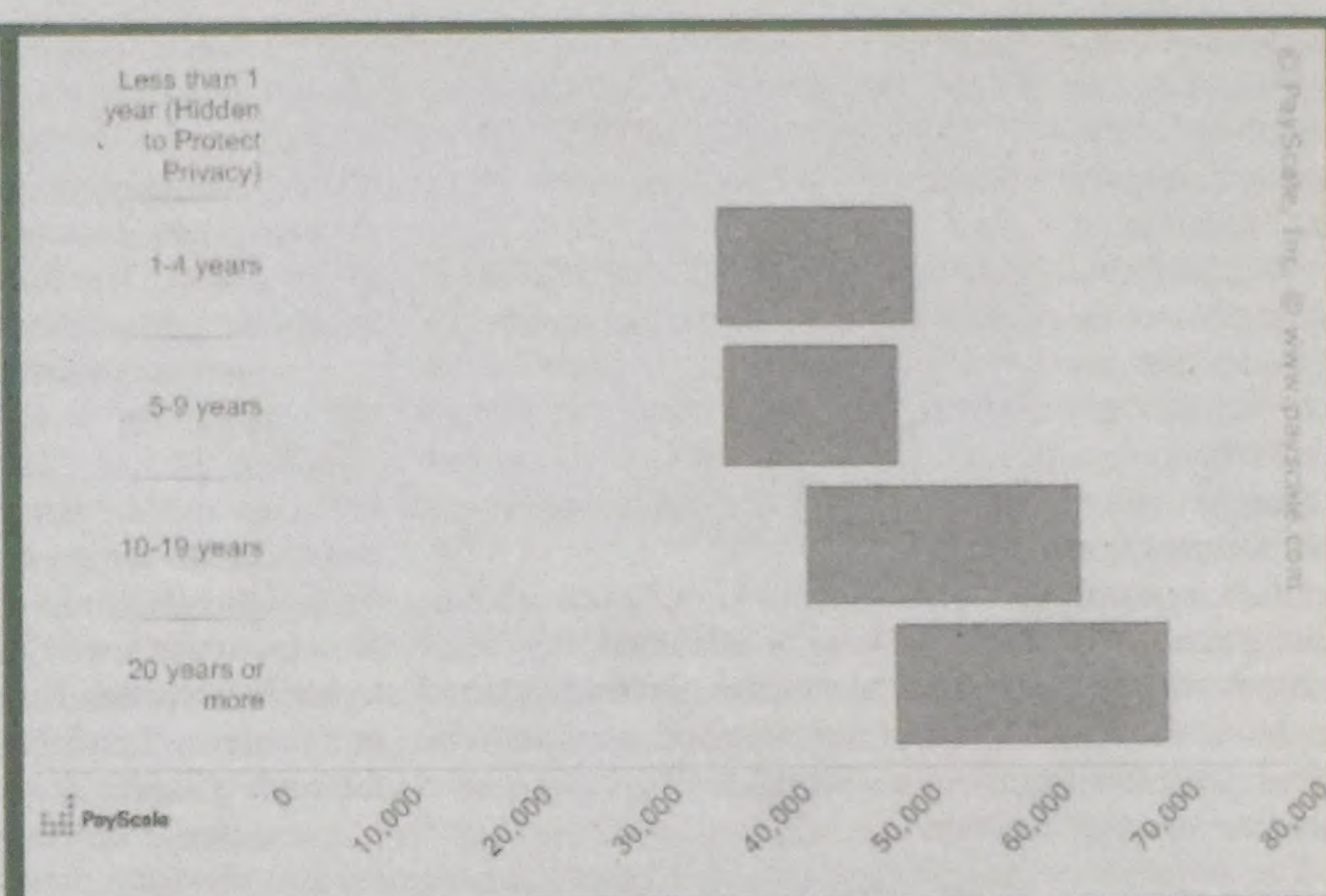
A Christian isn't there to know all the answers, or know someone who does, or to have read the right books to tell you what you need to know.

All a Christian needs to be

What is "the going rate?"

According to a November survey, the median salary for a pastor in the United States is \$85,634.

At the right are current stats for senior pastors in Canada, according to www.PayScale.com.



is a follower and imitator of Christ. When I open up a Bible and focus only on the words and actions of Jesus, I see what I, a follower of Christ, need to be: someone who lives in awareness and appreciation of my creator and compares myself with his character. Someone who receives God's love and draws my strength from that love. Someone who believes that he created me exactly the way he wants me to be, and then leads me to the places and communities where he wants to bless me and for my presence to be a blessing to others. A Christian is someone who loves to be in God's presence.

When I choose to belong to a church, it is my fervent hope that the people who are already in that church and the people who will join it after I do are also people who really want to live in the presence of God, people who want the people around them to become more and more aware of God's wonderful love for them. I want to be with people who gently encourage each other to grow into a deeper understanding of their Creator and what it means for each of us to take up our cross and follow Christ. We don't push each other down. Instead, we grow to depend on each other as we encourage and nudge each other onward on our personal journeys.

The business of calling

I think it is a mistake to view the hiring of a pastor in the same way a business owner might view hiring an employee. It is a calling to be a pastor. It is a mysterious spiritual force that leads a pastor to a church and leads a church to consider a pastor. It is a miracle that provides trusting believers the money to pay their tithes to support their pastor. It is not a business relationship; it is a spiritual connection.

When a church decides to hire a pastor to help around the house with some of the more time-consuming work for our community, it is my hope that they would be prepared to pay the pastor the going rate. Jesus said, "A worker deserves his wages" (Luke 10:7). If my group of volunteers doesn't think they

can pay a decent wage, then they shouldn't be hiring a pastor. Unless a church dares to step out in faith and trust God to provide the resources to pay the pastor, a church can still function without one.

If a church decides not to hire a pastor, volunteers can take care of the pastoral work; we are all called to be saints and priests in God's family. We can take turns studying the word and blessing each other with a short talk describing what God has laid on our hearts for our group this week (1 Corinthians 14:29-33). We can all take responsibility for our congregation and visit each other in times of need and celebration (Ephesians 4:12). We can take advantage of pulpit supply rotations within our classis for special services like baptism and Lord's supper. We can get vacationing or guest pastors in for weddings, funerals and maybe a few weeks of labour at a time.

It might be worthwhile to sit down together as a congregation one day to spend some time rethinking your own idea of what church is, to reconsider the way that church activities are run, e.g. mission trips, staffing, cleaning, youth groups, catechism, Bible studies, outreach, catering, parties, Sunday school. It would be good to re-plan them in a new way that better suits the unique personality of your congregation and the resources you have available. It is a step of faith, regardless what you do. If God wants your church to do without a pastor for a while, you need to have faith that God will call and equip people within your congregation to fill the need. If you believe that God wants your church to engage the services of a pastor, you need to have faith that God will provide the money to pay a pastor.

In the Christian Reformed Church there is a little bit of assistance available to churches who meet the criteria for Home Missions. Grants for programs and staffing are provided to mission-focused churches. Home Missions also administers grants from the Fund for Smaller Churches. If you belong to a smaller church and are struggling to pay for your staffing and programs, talk to your classical (area) Home Missions representative about how to apply for assistance. For more information, visit <http://www.crcna.org/pages/crhm.cfm>.

Ellen Vanderwerf lives a calm and happy life in Duncan, B.C. with her family, including her husband, a pastor.



Debate

Belhar Confession debated

Part III

One central touchstone of being Reformed is that we are “always Reforming.” How can the church best express its relevance and faithfulness in the 21st century for the next generation of Reformed Christians?

John Bolt

This question is much more difficult to answer than the first two were. Not only does it come freighted with several presumptions about the Reformed faith, but where is the connection to the Belhar Confession? Why would the editors of *Christian Courier* make this their third question about the Belhar? How does it fit?

On reflection it occurs to me that the question reveals something important about the reasons the Belhar is being advocated for the CRC. Consider the opening declaration: “One central touchstone of being Reformed is that we are ‘always Reforming.’” Really? The source of this slogan is notoriously difficult to pin down; it is oft-repeated but cannot be found in John Calvin or any of the great confessions or catechisms of the Reformed faith. Perhaps the best way to describe its use in the Reformed community is to think of it as an urban legend.

Here I need to make a second point. When we carefully examine the exact words of the slogan as they have been variously attributed to four different and contemporaneous Dutch Reformed theologians – Johannes Hooibeeck (1617-1666); Gijsbertus Voetius (1589-1676); Jodocus von Lodenstein (in 1675); or Jacobus Koelman (in 1678) – we discover that the phrase does not at all say and mean what most people have in mind when they repeat it. We need to take the entire slogan into account: *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est secundu verbum dei* (the church having been reformed must always be reforming according to the Word of God).

Origins of the catchphrase

Two things follow:

1. While it is true that the slogan is favoured by Reformed folk, is “always reforming according to the Word of God” somehow peculiar to the Reformed tradition and one of its hallmarks? In fact – an indication that the phrase was apparently popular in the late seventeenth century – a counter-slogan was coined by Pope Innocent XI (pope from 1676 to 1689): *numquam reformat qui numquam deformata* (never reformed because never deformed). While it is true that this is how Reformed folk thought of themselves, the “church” in *ecclesia reformata* could just as well refer to the Protestant church more broadly.

And what was meant by this “ongoing reform?” Essentially, the Christian life of sanctification. The point was this: Now that

the doctrine and structures of the church have been reformed according to the word of God it remains for God’s people to start living their daily lives as the people of God. This is the reason why after the Reformation generations of both Lutherans and Calvinists, under the power of the Holy Spirit, experienced great renewal movements of Pietism, Further Reformation (*Nadere Reformatie*) and Puritanism. *Semper reformanda* means further sanctification, greater holiness, becoming more Christ-like – not a perpetual re-fashioning of doctrine. Of course, Reformation folk have always held that doctrine must always be tested by Scripture. But that was not the point of the slogan then.

2. There is thus no warrant here for using this catchphrase as a broad-based ground for introducing “change” into a church in order to become more “relevant,” appeal more to youth, interest our neighbors in church or any such reason. While it is easy to understand why advocates for such changes appeal to the “always reforming” slogan (which, incidentally, is not identical with “always changing”), to put it as kindly as possible, this is to misuse it.

The Belhar connection

What does this now have to do with the Belhar? On the face of it, very little. One could of course say that the Belhar calls for a reformation of life in the area of racism. Then, even with the restrictive definition I just proposed, one could conclude that the Belhar is a change “according to the Word of God.” I fully grant that this could be the case; I shall now indicate why I doubt it.

Whether they intended it or not, in asking the question the way they did, the editors captured the pulse of energy behind the advocacy of the Belhar as a confession. In other words, the intention behind the push to adopt the Belhar is a desire to change the church and its doctrine in order to effect change in conduct. And then, to justify this

See Bolt on page 15

In 1982, a Reformed church in Belhar, a suburb of Cape Town in South Africa, wrote a confession of faith that focused on social justice issues that arose around apartheid. Since then, the Belhar Confession has been accepted by some African and European Reformed churches as equal to the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt and the Heidelberg Catechism. In July, the Synod of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) accepted it as a fourth confession and the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRCNA) voted by 72 percent to propose the adoption of the Belhar Confession as a fourth standard of unity at Synod 2012.

Christian Courier asked Dr. John Bolt and Shiao Chong to respond to the Belhar’s consideration by answering six questions posed by the editorial team in a series of six features over three months.

Shiao Chong

The Latin phrase, *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*, is often mistranslated as “the church reformed, always reforming,” rather than “the church reformed, always being reformed.”¹ This mistranslation erroneously suggests that the church reforms itself rather than it being God, through his Word, who reforms the church. For me, this means that between relevance to contemporary issues and faithfulness to God’s Word, our emphasis should be



on faithfulness – but NOT faithfulness to a specific human interpretation of God’s Word. We need to walk this fine balance. If we fall into uncritical faithfulness, then we are in danger of confession-alism, making our fallible confessions on par with God’s infallible Word. However, if we fall into becoming culturally relevant for relevance’s sake, we are in danger of contextualism.

Ignore it or reform it

All our theologies and interpretations of God’s Word are culturally and historically influenced. Hence, there are always theological “blind spots” in our theologies. As we engage with different cultural and historical contexts, we may become aware of some of these blind spots. When this happens, we can choose to either ignore them or reform them.

This, to me, is what’s behind the motto, “the church reformed, always being reformed.” When the Holy Spirit convicts the church of its errors and blind spots through the Word and providentially through new contexts that illumine our biblical interpretations, the church’s proper response is to reform, as faithfully as it can, in accordance to that conviction. And since every age and cultural context has its own blind spots, this process of reformation is always necessary. It is just as necessary for the 21st century church as it was for the 1st century church.

One of the serious theological blind spots

for the 1st century Jewish Christians was the Jew-Gentile barrier. God had to convict them of this blind spot and reform them to be more faithful to his mission. When Jesus gave the Great Commission to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations,” (Matt. 28:19 NRSV) he was commanding his Jewish disciples to do cross-cultural ministry, as “all nations” is shorthand for Gentiles. But old habits die hard. The Jewish disciples initially did not take their mission “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). God had to keep pushing them in that direction by first miraculously empowering them to speak in different languages at Pentecost, resulting in the conversion of three thousand linguistically and culturally different Jewish pilgrims from all over the Roman empire, including some Roman Gentile proselytes (Acts. 2:10).

But cultural tensions soon occurred within the infant church in Jerusalem between Hebraic Jews and Hellenistic Jews. The Hellenistic widows were “being neglected in the daily distribution of food” (Acts 6:2) by, apparently, Hebraic food distributors. The apostles remedied the problem by choosing seven men – all Hellenists, judging by their names – including a Gentile, “Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch” (Acts 6:5) to oversee the food distribution.

It is Stephen, one of these seven Hellenists, who became the first Christian martyr. The ensuing persecution forced the early Christians out of Jerusalem. Hence, Philip began preaching the gospel to Samaritans and even to an Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8). Gradually and providentially, the early Jewish Christians were pushed out of their comfort zones and into cross-cultural ministry. But all these experiences still did not remove their theological blind spot. They still could not see that it is part of God’s mission to break the Jew-Gentile barrier.

God had to tell Peter in a vision – three times no less – that “what God has made clean, you must not call profane” (Acts 10:15). God gave the Gentile centurion Cornelius the gift of the Holy Spirit right before Peter’s eyes. This was the beginning of a theological reformation within the infant church’s mindset.

Healing the blind spots

Later, as Gentile converts increased due to the apostle Paul’s missionary work,

See Chong on page 15

Everyday life

Intangible Things

Heidi VanderSlikke

Signs of spring

Heidi VanderSlikke

Some jobs on the farm require exceptional skill; others demand brute strength. Lucky for me there are also jobs that take nothing more than dogged determination like scraping manure off the barn floor, or chopping clean straw for incoming chicks. Those tasks are an invitation to do what I've been good at since childhood: daydream to my heart's content.

A wagon full of straw looks intimidating. But I know from experience I can empty it – not all at once of course, just one bale at a time. My job is to feed the bales into the chopper standing outside of the barn. Inside, Jack works with the heavy plastic pipe, blowing the straw across the barn floor into a nice, even layer.

After the first few bales, I lower the hood of my ski-jacket. The sun shines warmly on my head. I adjust my earmuffs and think how nice it is to wear thin work gloves instead of the heavy ones that make it difficult to get my fingers under the twine.

Water trickles across the gravel laneway, runoff from piles of melting snow on the yard. Ah, spring. Here and there patches of grass emerge. Soon we'll need to rake the gravel and accumulated debris from the lawn.



Using a straw chopper

Behind the barn, past the manure pile, last year's corn stubble peeks through the vestiges of winter's white blanket. In a few weeks Jack will plant that field with soybeans and haul the manure over to James and Willene's farm. I feed another bale into the chopper and wonder how bad the stone picking will be over there and whether spring planting will be as challenging as it was last year.

Between the granaries two male partridges argue over a handful of spilled corn. The larger one puffs up his feathers and struts imposingly toward the other bird. I giggle at his cocky posture. The smaller bird is apparently impressed and retreats hastily to the cedars.

With the wagon half empty I head up the

stairs in the barn. Jack gestures that he's ready to drop the hose through the floor. I go to the first floor and try to lay it out without too many bends, so that the straw can pass through easily. Six inches in diameter and a hundred feet long, the hose fights back as I try to tame it. Eventually I prevail.

Back on the wagon I breathe in the warm spring air and smile. Then I remember the files and financial records I need to put in order for the accountant. I wonder what the tax bill will look like. Then again, I guess any farmer who pays taxes has something to be thankful for.

I resolve to think of something more pleasant. Oh dear. There's a HACCP audit due this month as well, including new "Animal Care Protocol" forms. What is the required ratio of chickens to feeder pans? And why would anyone need to know that information anyway?

Ah, spring – a season of hope and potential. It's time to set your clock ahead and try to convince your body to keep up. It's what I long for all winter and fear when it arrives for all the work that beckons me out of hibernation. The sun is warmer, the days are longer and the whole world comes back to life, including me.

Only a few bales remain now. Jack sig-

nals me for "one more." I climb down and wait for the last bale to clear. Jack gives the thumbs up and I shut down the PTO and the auxiliary engine. As I take off my headset I'm able to hear the birds singing. Before long the robins will return.

After coffee I walk with Rocky around the farm. A random patch of crocuses pokes through beside the lane. The creek bank is full of tracks – evidence of raccoons, deer, geese and ducks. Up on the hill a mound of dirt proves the groundhogs are awake.

I sit for a few minutes on a boulder beside the rushing water, savouring the bright blue sky. Rocky explores the soft mud at the creek's edge.

Signs of spring surround me, tangible reminders of God's intangible presence, all demonstrating his ability to bring new life to a dead world. And even though my mind keeps wandering to all the work ahead, I know it's just like that wagonload of straw – nothing I can't handle with God's help – one bale at a time.

Heidi VanderSlikke (vander-slikke@everus.ca) lives in Harriston, Ont.



From Toddlers to Teens

by Denise Dykstra



Studying for parenthood

My oldest son is 15 years old. He's not driving yet. He could be – in Alberta you can get your Learner's Licence when you're 14 – but that would mean he'd have to take a test. And studying isn't something he's very fond of.

Unfortunately for Sean, studying isn't something he'll be able to avoid for very long. Eventually he'll want to drive badly enough that he'll be forced to dive into the Basic Licence Driver's Handbook. And if he plans to graduate from high school...well, he doesn't have much choice but to learn there, does he?

There are lots of things in life that require a degree of analysis. We can't drive a boat without taking a quiz, nor can we fish without getting a licence. My friend from South Africa spent hours priming herself for her citizenship test while another friend's daughter hit the books for days to pass her SAT so she could go to college in the States. Studying ensures we're prepared for the road ahead of us. And that's a good thing, isn't it?

So why is it we're not required to prepare for one of the most important challenges we'll ever take on – parenting?

Don't get me wrong, I don't think we should be forced to take a government exam before we're allowed to conceive. That would be ludicrous and obviously impossible to manage. Imagine some stern man

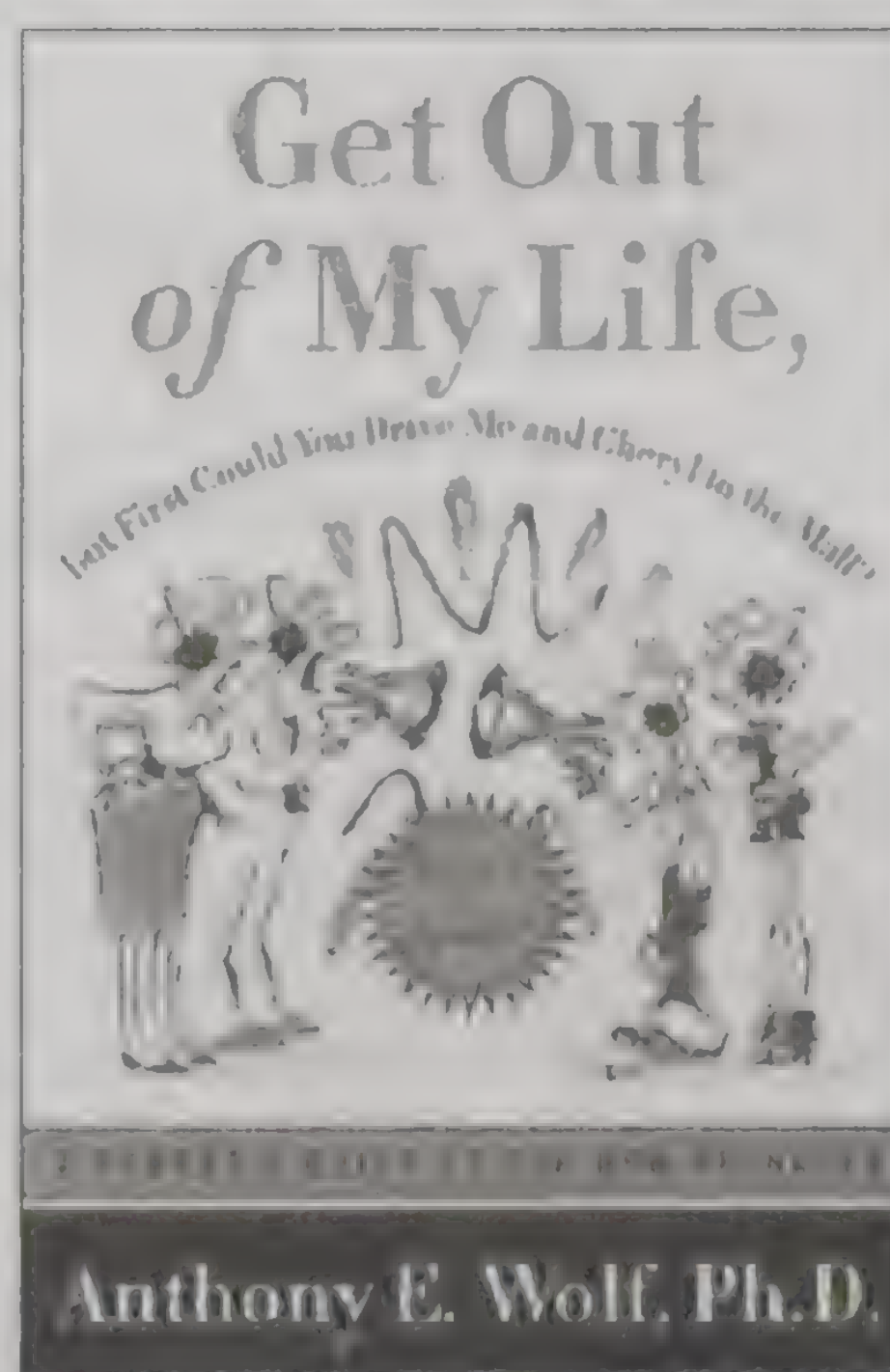
in a suit looking over your test results before he steps aside and allows you and your husband to open your bedroom door. Kinda ruin the mood, wouldn't it?

When Ray and I became foster parents we were required by Alberta Child and Family Services to take a number of parenting courses. The same was true when we became adoptive parents. Both times we were also subjected to an in-depth home study, and we had more than one person come to our house to delve into our finances, our family life, and our physical environment.

When Ray and I became biological parents, all we really prepared for was labour and delivery, and the prenatal courses we took to make childbirth manageable were completely voluntary.

Parenting is difficult. And it's important. Too important to tackle with a fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants attitude. Thankfully, there are many people who've travelled the long road ahead of us, and we can draw on their experiences and knowledge to help us raise our kids in a way that brings out the best in them.

What follows is a list of my favourite



parenting books. I haven't read every parenting book on the market, so it's far from an exhaustive list, but what I've learned from these authors has been invaluable. I hope you'll check out their thoughts and ideas and find them to be as worthwhile as I have.

How to Really love your Child by Ross Campbell. This small but powerful book is a wonderful parenting guide. I think

everybody should receive it as a gift when they have a baby! Written by a psychiatrist, the premise of this book is that everyone loves their children but not everyone gives their children that love. Campbell includes practical suggestions on how to convey love to your kids so that they feel loved.

Hold on to your Kids by Gordon Neufeld and Gabor Mate. My sister-in-law gave me this book, and I'll forever be grateful. I've learned so much from it, including how common it is for children to look to their peers – instead of their parents – for direction. Neufeld, a psychologist, and Gabor, a phys-

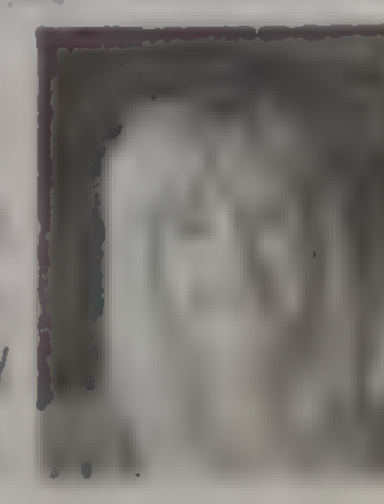
ician, discuss the negative effects of peer orientation and how it can be prevented, and they spell out the steps parents need to take to build a lasting bond with their children.

Get Out of My Life, but first could you drive me and Cheryl to the mall? by Anthony E. Wolf. Using humour and wit, clinical psychologist Wolf explains in an easy-to-understand way why adolescents do what they do. He gives readers the ability to translate teenage behaviour into its true meaning so they can deal with that behaviour effectively. In our household we call this book "The Book" because it's brought out and referred to so often. (Wolf's written a similar book for parents of toddlers and preteens called *The Secret of Parenting*.)

And then, of course, there's the book that's our ultimate source of information – the Bible. It may have been written thousands of years ago but the Bible still offers timely, practical advice regarding parenting. Hopefully you've been recognizing some of that advice in this column every month.

Any other books you'd recommend? Please let me know. I'm not taking a test but I still have much to learn!

Denise Dykstra (dykstras@telus.net) lives in Edmonton, Alberta. She's a writer and mother of five.



Kuyper

You are the branches



*I am the vine; you are the branches.
If a man remains in me and I in him,
he will bear much fruit;
apart from me you can do nothing.*

John 15:5

Abraham Kuyper

A branch of the vine is nothing but a conduit for sap to be transported from the root to the clusters of grapes. Apart from the vine, the branch is nothing. The vine has life, and the fruit of the clusters turn green or blue. But the branch only has a mediating role between the vine and the clusters. Its only purpose is to suction sap from below and push it on up to the clusters of grapes and hold these up until they are ripe and can be harvested as the fruit of the vine. The vine is central and so is the fruit it will bear. The role of the branch is only incidental, for even the woody part of a branch is useless for any other purpose. The vine has value, and the grape clusters of the vine are a much desired commodity, but no one will pay a cent for the branch. A branch, Jesus himself says, is good for nothing except to be thrown into the fire like weeds. Indeed, the Lord deeply humiliates his people when he says to his followers, "You are branches." Branches! The most worthless and useless parts of the plant for any owner.

You, proud people, with all your pretensions to nobility; you, devout people, great in your own imaginations; you, people of God, don't you try to make yourself appear holy? Even if, like Peter, you are called an apostle, or like John, "the beloved of the Lord," in fact, you are only branches.

That is your most honorable title, and that's all you get in the line of respectability.

Fruitful and barren

Unless, and now the situation is completely turned around, unless you as a branch are attached to the vine. When you are rooted to the source of life, the tips show not only green leaves but also heavy clusters of grapes. It makes all the difference whether the branch is off the vine or still attached to the vine. Once it is cut off it is useless to the gardener and will need to be removed from the vineyard altogether. But you had better not touch those branches still bearing green leaves and fruit.

The branches which are attached are worth their weight in gold! He cares for them day and night. He supports them and binds them up; he prunes them and turns them to the sun, because those branches will bear fruit! As long as the gardener notices that a branch clings

to the vine, and under its leaves a cluster of grapes is growing, that otherwise useless piece of wood is worth more to him than the most precious exotic hardwood. He will defend it with his life, if someone tries to damage or rip that branch off the vine.

These examples have spiritual meaning. You, the people of the Lord, are only branches. While in yourselves you are no more than inflated vanity, once ingrafted in Christ you will bear much fruit, and suddenly you become indispensable to the vine. Without branches the vine cannot display its splendour; and without the branches, your heavenly Father, the gardener, will find no fruit on that vine.

Channels only

O, if only the people of the Lord would set their whole heart on clinging to Immanuel and stop being satisfied in just feeling close to him, kneeling down before him, or even in looking up to him with pleading eyes. All these external gestures are unprofitable in themselves. One

All that lives in you must flow from the life of Christ, your Lord. Before it can arise in your heart, it must be drawn and suctioned from him. To be a conduit for grace, for light and love, for life itself, is all that a branch can do. Being such a conduit to the clusters will bear rich fruit. This means that you must not hold onto the life-fluid for yourself, as if to enlarge your own position to become a stem. No, everything is passed on, and only a minuscule amount of fluid is used to maintain the branch itself. The benefits come in the fruits.

The branches know that the heavenly Gardener will soon come to look for the fruit for his Son, and it is the great honour of the branches to offer up the rich and ripe grape clusters, not as products of the branch, but as the fruit of the Vine. This is the fruit of Jesus' suffering on the cross, offered to the heavenly Father.

Bearing the fruit

"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit" [John 15:8].

Please note, that you are to bear much fruit, but not to produce it. You bear fruit just as a candlestick bears the light, but the fruit is no more yours than the light is produced by the candlestick. You bear fruit for Jesus. What you bear are his fruits. They are the fruit of his labour, his suffering, and the work of his hand. You yourself have no part at all in the production and growth of those fruits.

It is like this. The fruit grows and ripens on your branch, and that is to your indisputable honour, and you can never praise and glorify your Saviour enough for that. Nevertheless, bearing the fruit is the limit of your calling. Bearing it not for yourself, but for him who will one day come to harvest it. The fruit clings to you, but it belongs to the Father and comes from the Son. It is your job to take it from the Son and to hand it over to the Father in his name. Of course you may also produce leaves and may even grow them profusely. But they are not intended to serve your pride and ego, to decorate you in glorious green, but only to help shield the grape clusters and promote their ripening. Not you, but the Father, must be glorified in the leaves as well as the grapes. All glory belongs to the Father, even though it may come through you. It comes from the Son.

That's how it is for those who wish to be branches. The branch is nothing much in itself, but it constitutes a glorious part of the whole vine when it acts as a conduit for

the sap of the plant to benefit the fruit.

So now, you are the branches! What is your response to that? Are you branches of the living vine? Or are you still just clinging to the vine for your own sake? ✂

*The entire text of this book can be found at
<http://www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/Kuyper/Kuyper-PentecostPDF.pdf>*

Note: This is the last installment of our Kuyper series. Many thanks to Jack Van Meggelen for his excellent translation. This feature will be replaced in future issues by a rotating sample of current Reformed thought.

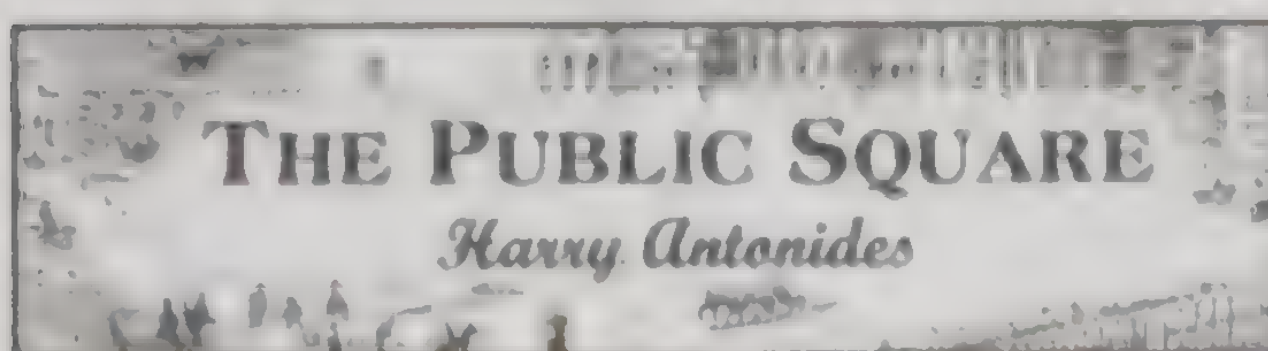


The Vine by Melame Pyke (From painting the Psalms. www.melpyke.com)

could place a branch on the vine, or even tie it to the vine, but it would soon wither and die, and the gardener would soon remove it and throw it away.

As children of God we have to be ingrafted and incorporated so that our lives grow together, intertwined with that of the vine, so that we are no longer our own but completely dependent on the vine for life and the bearing of fruit. It is not so that you produce sap for the vine now and again and carry it for the vine. Rather, because you are completely empty in yourself, it is important that you draw all your strength, your power, your praise and love and all your deepest tenderness from your Lord. He alone fills you with the life-giving fluid of his love.

Culture



THE PUBLIC SQUARE

Harry Antonides

Never again.
Again?

When the truth about the unspeakable crimes committed against the Jewish people by Hitler's thugs dawned on everyone, the guilt-stricken citizens of all free nations agreed: "Never again" must such evil occur.

We have come a long way from that noble intention. The reality is that the state of Israel, founded in 1948 to ensure that the Jewish people would always have a safe haven, is in dire peril. Not only is it threatened by its Arab/Muslim enemies, including the Iranian madman who has threatened to wipe Israel off the map; but anti-Semitism in the free West is also on the rise again.

Many now consider Israel the biggest stumbling block to peace in the Middle East because it is unwilling to surrender any more of its tiny territory and to have its population expand by a few million Palestinians who demand their "right to return." Even former president Jimmy Carter has lent his prestige to finding Israel guilty of sabotaging the so-called peace efforts.

Closer to home, the Canadian universities have become a front in the battle about Israel's right to exist. Of course, this conflict is not put in such stark terms. But this is what is at stake in reality. That's why the Palestinians and their Arab supporters have maps without showing the state of Israel. They have coined such terms as "occupation" and "apartheid" as code words for inciting hatred toward Israel.

This is the sixth year that Arab and Muslim students at all major Canadian universities have conducted an "Israel Apartheid Week" (March 1-8). These anti-Israel events feature speakers who denounce Israel as an illegitimate state that must be forced (as South Africa was by the use of boycotts, divestments, and sanctions) to drop its "apartheid" policies, and agree to Palestinian demands that in fact would ensure the demise of the state of Israel. (Neither Hamas nor Fatah, supposedly a peace partner, has shown any indication that they have abandoned their ultimate goal of eliminating the state of Israel. How can peace be established with such partners?)

A hostile environment

David Frum reported that York University (Toronto) had turned down a request from the campus group Christians United for Israel to schedule a program of pro-Israel speakers in late February. The university demanded that this group pay for a heavy security presence of campus and Toronto police. Furthermore, the university requested a list of the attendees and a summary of all the speeches. No advertising was permitted on the York campus or on other campuses connected by remote video.

A university representative told the *Jewish Tribune* that these stringent requirements were needed to prevent "anti-Israel campus agitators" from causing trouble. The students were unable and unwilling to be subjected to the conditions of the university. Frum aptly summarized its double standard as follows:

The logic is impressively brazen: Since the anti-Israel people might use violence, the speech of the pro-Israel people must be limited. On the other hand, since the pro-Israel people do not use violence, the speech of the anti-Israel can proceed without restraint. (National Post, Feb. 27, 2010)

Two weeks later, Frum wrote that this statement elicited more reactions from Canadians and readers in other countries than anything he has written over many years in the *National Post*. Their main criticism was that the atmosphere at York is heavily influenced by political correctness and therefore it is antagonistic to freedom of speech and thought.

Frum concluded that students and former students, alumni and teaching staff agree that York is a hostile environment for Jewish students. They are forced to subordinate or disguise their identity, suppress their views and avoid cultural expression. The university's strategy seems to be not to admit there is a problem, but to hunker down and hope that the storm will pass. But you have to wonder, *What can the future hold for an institution of learning that seems to be telling Jewish students and teachers, 'Do everybody a favour – please go elsewhere.'*

Where have we heard all of this before? Yesterday, in Nazi Germany. Today, at Canadian universities. Tomorrow, the state of Israel?

But where is the public outcry against such bigotry? Are we listening to the David Frums in our midst? One thing is sure. This time it will not be only the Jews who are told to go elsewhere. If the West is prepared to look the other way *again*, and abandon Israel and the Jews in the Diaspora, there will come a time that the rest of us, too, will be told to go elsewhere. The big question is, what are we going to do about that?

Harry Antonides (hantonides@sympatico.ca) retired as director of the former Work Research Foundation. He lives in Willowdale, Ontario.



Christ @ Culture

Lloyd Rang

Information overload?
Try context underload.

Some days, between work email, personal email, Facebook messages, Tweets and good old-fashioned phone calls, I get a little overwhelmed. But I'm not alone. The amount of information each of us is expected to process in a typical day is just staggering.

Consider this: Every issue of *The New York Times* contains more information than someone living in the 17th century would have encountered in a lifetime. There is enough scientific information written each year to keep a person busy reading day and night for 460 years. In the past 30 years we have produced more information than in the previous 5,000. And the average American sees 16,000 advertisements, logos, and labels every single day.

An American author named Alvin Toffler saw all this coming in the 1970s when he coined the term "Information Overload." He said that having too much information makes us unable to make good decisions. Some people think Toffler is wrong. Scientists say our brains are more amazing than we know. They say we can store something like 1,000 terabytes of information – or a "petabyte." That's like 4,000 standard desktop computers, each with a full hard drive. In other words, we could never actually "overload" our brains because there simply isn't that much information available to us.

So which is it? Are we overwhelmed with information, or are we only scratching the surface of what we're capable of learning, remembering and understanding?

I'd say it's both.

And neither.

I see the human brain this way: I imagine millions and millions of playing cards in a living room. Some are in neat stacks. But others are lying face up on the carpet, and still others are face down. Some are behind the bookcase; others are wedged between the cushions on the couch. The cards contain information, but so often there's no order, no organization, and no way to get to some of the information you need.

If you've ever found yourself searching for the name of a band whose music you've played hundreds of times, or struggling to remember an old friend's middle name, or "gapped," suddenly, when dialing a number you know by heart, you know what I mean.

All the information in our brains is useless unless we develop a personal filing system that keeps all the pieces straight so we can make sense of the world.

School does that for us. It helps us to file information away under broad headings like "history," "math" and "science," and from

there into sub-headings such as "World War II – Causes and Effects." If you take all that information and give it context, it begins to make sense. The problem with living in the Information Age is that there are more bits of information than boxes to put them in.

How do I file crackpot Internet theories about 9/11, for example? Or all the celebrity gossip I get from TV and radio? Where do I file all the junk information I have in my head? How do I prevent the outcome of American Idol from becoming just as important a piece of information as what happened on August 14, 1945?

I'd say we're not suffering from information overload, we're suffering from context underload. It's tough to keep all our information straight, organized, and prioritized.

Our souls have the same problem. Our souls are bombarded every day by too much information, too much temptation, too much doubt and noise and worry. It's hard to decide what's important, and what's immediate in a spiritual sense.

There seems to be no safe and quiet place where we can reflect, and find the rest our souls need.

When I was a teenager, my dad had a plaque put up in our house. It was about

five feet long and bore the Dutch words "*Rust, Mijn Ziel Uw God is Koning*" (Rest, my soul, your God is King).

It seemed strange to me, at the time, that a sign about finding rest should have such big letters. It was almost as if the sign was shouting at me.

But now I realize why my dad chose to make the sign so big. The words need to be big because the world is so loud. We need to be told – perhaps even commanded sometimes – to take rest.

I don't mean rest for our bodies. We get plenty of that. If I were designing a motivational sign for my own house, it would probably read, in big letters: "Arise, shine for your light has come!" and, in slightly smaller letters: "And run a few laps around the block while you're at it."

No, what we really need – even more than a way to organize our information – is a way to bring rest to our souls.

Have you felt this way? Has the world jangled your spiritual nerves? Do you have trouble finding even a piece of the peace that passes understanding?

The Bible offers such a place. A place of

Continued on p. 15

Family

My window seat

Mendelt Hoekstra

Childhood projections

My children often say things that either will not come true or are not based in reality.

My 3-year-old tells me that we will always live together and she will always sleep in the bottom bunk. I tell her that she will always be welcome to live with me (although I may change my mind if she still asks at age 30).

My 6-year-old is convinced that one day she will meet the "real Cinderella." I tell her she is the real princess.

After the umpteenth time of reviewing the laundry basket rules, my 7-year-old assures me he will never again put his socks in the laundry inside out. I tell him I'm hopeful.

When I was a child, I talked like a child. I reasoned like a child.

When I was a child, I said some things that didn't come true. One of them happened last Sunday.

When I was a child, my mother had, what I perceived as an obsession, with making sure my face was clean. If my face wasn't clean, my face was in for it. I didn't get

punished in the typical sense, but it sure felt like a punishment. My face was about to get "cleaned."

When I was a child, I saw my mother as a strong woman. She could carry bags of potatoes with ease, pick up full pans of soup with grace and instruct six children to sit up straight with a quick look, without even moving a muscle. And her fingers were beasts. My dirty face would bear the brunt of those strong and purposeful fingers.

It would usually happen as we exited the car for church. She would help us out of the car and give us a quick inspection. I would stand up straight. She would have her little hanky, a thin piece of cloth ready. And if my face was crumbly, crusty or filthy, her finger went in the middle of the hanky and was cocked, ready for action. She'd try to either scrape, brush or chisel the offensive stain off my face. And if it wasn't coming off, my mom would use the only sure thing that would help. Her spit. She'd lick the hanky, hold my face ever so lovingly firm

and attack my face with a purpose and drive that would not fail.

I would clench my muscles. I would squirm. I would resist with futile effort. And I vowed I would never do that to my children.

Last Sunday, it was an imperfect storm of three events that caused my childhood declaration to shatter. We were on the verge of being late for the beginning of the church worship service. I forgot to ask the kids to wash their face, and we had eggs, bacon and ketchup for breakfast.

We managed to get into the van without tears or bruises. I noticed the ketchup on his cheek. It wasn't a large spot, but enough for me to notice. We made our way into the church parking lot, and, as my 7-year-old son jumped out of the van and was about to run through the parking lot up the stairs to church, I stopped him. He looked at me. I had a tissue in my hand. I tried to remove the ketchup. He started to flinch. He looked at me with a puzzling look. I knew that my

childhood promise was collapsing, but I couldn't do anything about it. I was scratching at the ketchup. It was caked on. So, as my mom so often did, I used some saliva to aid the process. It worked. The ketchup came off, just like that.

It is more than 25 years later. I can still see my mother's finger coming towards me. When she looks at me today, I stand in front of her, check my posture, and it is almost as if I'm waiting for her inspection. And maybe I am.

On the way home from church, my son and I spoke about the incident. I "apologized," but only a little. I told him that even though I couldn't help it, I felt like I needed to get that ketchup off his face. He vowed never to do that to his kids....

Mendelt Hoekstra (mendelt.hoekstra@gmail.com) is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda, an organization that supports adults with developmental possibilities. He lives near St. Catharines, Ont. with his three children.

Bolt . . . continued from p. 11

change, we are asked, "isn't a hallmark of the Reformed church to be 'always reforming,' i.e., 'always changing?'" Here is the important question: If the ultimate goal is a change of heart and life – a greater commitment to and actual achievement of unity and reconciliation – do we need to change the church and its confession to accomplish that? Will adding a new confession even achieve that?

Some of what I have said in the previous

Rang . . . continued from p. 14

rest for our souls. A place that gives us the context and meaning our lives so often miss. It speaks to us across the millennia in words as relevant in a world of simple shepherds as in our own complex and fast paced world. It says:

The LORD is my shepherd,

I shall not want;

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters;

He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness

for His name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley

of the shadow of death,

I fear no evil;

for You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life;

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

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two articles point to a "no" answer, and I will have to address this in the final three installments as well. For now I will limit myself to making one point. The Reformers indeed saw serious moral decay in the Roman Catholic Church and in the societies of Christendom and were grievously offended by it. And yes, key doctrines – justification, priesthood of all believers, sacraments and church offices, to mention a few – were instrumental in changing the conduct of Christians. But never was doctrine adopted for the sake of conduct; doctrine was adopted because it was believed to be true because it was taught in the Word of God. In the case of the Belhar, however, it is that line that has been reversed. The particular doctrine of reconciliation and unity is highlighted because of certain social and political circumstances and then used to change them. In this way the confessional character of the Reformed church is fundamentally changed.

It does, however, help explain the reasoning behind this statement by Rev. Douwe Visser of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches as it gets ready to consider a document on "Communion and Justice" at the Uniting General Council meeting in Grand Rapids this June: "Each regional group identified a clear link between church union – or communion as we call it – and actions on such issues as gender equality, protection of the environment and a more just economic system." (*REC News Exchange*, 47/2 [March 2010])

Dr. John Bolt is a professor of systematic theology at Calvin Seminary.



Chong . . . continued from p. 11

the theological issue came to a head. The Jerusalem Council was convened to deal with the debate between assimilating Gentile Christians into Jewish culture by observing circumcision or allowing them to remain as they were. In the end, the council decided to "not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God" (Acts 15:19). Eventually, the early church gained Paul's perspective that Christ "has broken down the dividing wall" between Jews and Gentiles, creating "in himself one new humanity in place of the two." Paul saw this as not merely a social justice add-on to the gospel, but as intrinsic to Christ's work on the cross: to "reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it" (Eph. 2:14-16).

God the Holy Spirit reformed the 1st century church through his Word and his providence. The Holy Spirit still does so today in the 21st century. We need to be sensitive to the Word and to providential "wake-up calls" that may come in unpleasant packages (e.g. the New Testament church's cultural tensions, persecutions and theological debates). A Reformed denomination's theological support of apartheid was an unpleasant "wake-up call" to other Reformed churches in South Africa, and eventually to others in the world.

The current three confessions – the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt – did not provide enough theological clarity to prevent a Reformed church from developing a doctrinal heresy that justifies absolute segregation and injustice between ethnic or racial groups. As

mentioned before, the themes of unity, reconciliation and justice are sadly muted in our current confessions; they are our confessions' theological blind spots. And even though apartheid may not directly be "our problem" here in North America, this "wake-up call" may help us see the real and potential racism infecting us in our culture here. What are our theological blind spots today? Will the Belhar Confession, then, aid us to be faithful in being reformed by God's Word and Spirit at this present time? We owe it to the next generation to seriously wrestle with these questions in our attempts at being faithful to God's Word and being relevant to the cultural contexts in which God has providentially placed us in.



(Endnotes)

1 See George W. Stroup's article, "Reformed Identity in an Ecumenical World" in *Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity*, eds. Wallace M. Alston Jr. and Michael Welker (Eerdmans 2003) p. 261.

Shiao Chong is the Christian Reformed Campus Minister serving at York University in Toronto.



Classifieds

Birth	Birthday	Anniversaries	
<p>With joy and thanksgiving to our Lord, Steve and Lori Klopper (nee Scholten) announce the safe arrival of healthy twin boys Ty Steven (6 lbs 1 oz) and Jackson John (6 lbs) on March 12, 2010</p> <p>Two new little grandsons for Jack and Theresa Scholten and Jerry and Marg. Klopper Also another great-grandchild for Alice Van Gysse.</p>	<p>With thankfulness to God, we celebrate a truly remarkable woman on the momentous occasion of her 80th Birthday!</p>  <p>Dorothy Veenhof (nee) Spoelstra</p> <p>April 12, 2010</p> <p>A loving wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother; a kind and caring friend to many. Indeed, her life is a testimony to the beauty and goodness of the Lord, and we stand as happy witnesses to that fact, and pray continued blessings on her life.</p> <p>Jacque and Howard VanderWier Diane and Paul Droppert Heather and Henry Kikkert Anne and Martin Vyn Will Veenhof Nick Veenhof</p> <p>24 Grandchildren & 8 Spouses 15 Great-grandchildren</p> <p><i>"Fresh and green (she) will remain Bearing fruit to a ripe old age Happy to tell about Your name A blessed endeavour The righteous flourish like the palm And grow like the cedars of Lebanon Planted in the courts of God Forever and ever"</i> —adapted from Psalm 92 by Steve Bell</p> <p>Bill and Dorothy Veenhof 130 - 1128 Vansickle Rd North St. Catharines ON L2S 3W1</p>	<p>Apeldoorn, the Neth. ~ Harriston, Ontario April 6, 1955 ~ April 6, 2010</p> <p>Joyful and with thankfulness to our Lord we are pleased to announce the 55th Wedding Anniversary of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, GEORGE AND ELEANOR MUNNIK</p> <p>An Open House in their honor will be held on Saturday April 10 from 2-4 p.m. at the Christian Reformed Church in Falmerton (White's Road next to the Hospital).</p> <p>You are invited by their children & grandchildren: Irma & John Devries and family. Freda & Len Schellingerhoudt & family Eric & Cecilia Munnik Roland & Holly Munnik & family</p> <p>As expression of congratulations please consider a gift to Wycliffe Bible Translators (the Barnhorns).</p> <p>Home: 5179 Line 13 Minto Twp RR 4 Harriston ON N0G 1Z0 519-327-4677</p>	 <p><i>Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain. Psalm 127:1</i></p> <p>HENK AND JANE VAN GIESSEN April 25, 1950 – April 25, 2010 60th Wedding Anniversary</p> <p>An Open House Celebration will be held in their honour on SATURDAY, APRIL 24TH 2 – 4 p.m. @ The Free Reformed Church 159 Gregory Drive East Chatham, Ontario</p>
<p>Classified</p> <p>DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION Christian Courier is published on the second and fourth Mondays of each month. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Tuesday, 13 days prior to publication date.</p> <p>RATES: All personal and family announcements: \$6.00 per square inch rose@christiancourier.ca Display advertising re. businesses and organizations: \$8.00 per square inch ads@christiancourier.ca</p> <p>SUBMITTING YOUR AD: e-mail – see above Mail: Christian Courier, 5 Joanna Dr St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1 Phone: 905-682-8311 1-800-969-4838 Business ads. 905-937-3314</p> <p>Now pay invoices and subscriptions online. See website for details.</p>	<p>Obituary</p> <p>June 12, 1935 — March 15, 2010</p> <p>In his wisdom and mercy the Lord took home to himself our dear brother,</p> <p>HESSEL DYKSTRA</p> <p>The funeral was held on Thursday, March 18 at Bethany CRC, in Bloomfield, Ont.</p> <p>He leaves his wife of 27 years, Connie (nee) Schilstra, and children, Donna, Andrew, and Daniel.</p> <p>Lovingly remembered by: Nick Dykstra, Belleville, Ont. William & Virginia Dykstra, Severn Bridge, Ont. Rennie & Marten VanderWal, Belleville, Ont. Jane & John Breukelaar, Peterboro, Ont.</p> <p><i>He fought the good fight. (2 Tim. 4:7)</i></p> <p>Correspondence: Connie Dykstra, RR 1 Bloomfield ON K0K 1G0</p>	<p>Obituary</p> <p>MEILE (Mike) TAMMINGA born on June 13, 1927 in Hemeler Oldevaart, Friesland, The Netherlands went home to be with his Lord on March 25, 2010. He was a loving husband of Roelie of Brampton, Ontario for 58 years.</p> <p>He is loved and will be missed by his wife Roelie (nee Huisman) and seven children: Mary (Rob), Fran (Rob), Ed (Angela), Ingrid (Roger), Louis (Linda), Michael, and Sylvia (Dwayne), as well as 17 grandchildren & 7 great-grandchildren. He is predeceased by his brother Ytzen, and survived by six siblings: Nienke, Tinie, Frits, Saar, Fei and Leo.</p>	
<p>2 Homes for Rent</p> <p>2 bedroom house in St. Catharines across from Beacon Christian School. Garage plus large fenced in yard. Available April 1, 2010. \$750.00 plus utilities.</p> <p>3 bedroom house in St. Catharines with basement partly finished, garage and large fenced-in yard. Across from Beacon Christian School. \$850.00 plus utilities. Available May 1, 2010.</p> <p>Please call Gary Prinsen 905-935-7690 Helen Bezuyen 905-468-4334</p>	<p>Vacation</p> <p>Holiday accommodation in Holland with vehicle rentals, tours. www.chesthutlane.nl</p>	<p>FOOTSTEPS OF PAUL</p> <p>Faith based Journey in Turkey and Greece.</p> <p>Hosted by Pastor Bob Beasley of the Bible League of Canada.</p> <p>March 19 - April 2, 2011.</p> <p>Vellinga's Travel Service 244 Queen Street, Chatham, ON</p> <p>www.vellingastravel.com 1-877-352-5150 TICO 50016006</p>	<p>Obituary</p> <p>April 21, 1908 - Feb 27, 2010</p> <p>Psalm 91 <i>...He is my refuge and my fortress. My God, in him will I trust....</i></p> <p>WILHELMINA VAN GENT (nee Tensen) passed away in Faith Manor at Holland Christian Homes in Brampton in her 102nd year.</p> <p>Beloved wife of the late (John) Jan Dirk Pieter Van Gent. Loving mother of Dieke and Fred Osti, Pieter Nicolaas (deceased), Bill and Connie Van Gent, and Wilma and Bill Kamerman.</p> <p>Wilhelmina was always thankful, appreciative and a blessing to all. She will be dearly missed by her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren & extended family & friends.</p>

John Knox Christian School, Woodstock
is 50 years old!

We are planning our celebration
— Reflecting, Renewing, Rejoicing —
to commemorate the fifty years
that God has blessed us.
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Join us at an **Open House & Reunion** on
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We are looking forward to fellowship with you!

A **Celebration Evening** is also being planned.
Enjoy Refreshments, Dinner, Speakers and Music.
This special event is planned for
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For more information on these events please contact the school
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Obituary

April 21, 1908 - Feb 27, 2010

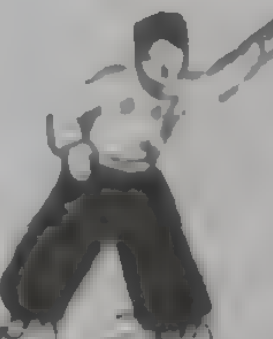
Psalm 91
*...He is my refuge and my fortress.
My God, in him will I trust....*

WILHELMINA VAN GENT (nee Tensen)
passed away in Faith Manor at Holland Christian Homes in Brampton in her 102nd year.

Beloved wife of the late (John) Jan Dirk Pieter Van Gent. Loving mother of Dieke and Fred Osti, Pieter Nicolaas (deceased), Bill and Connie Van Gent, and Wilma and Bill Kamerman.

Wilhelmina was always thankful, appreciative and a blessing to all. She will be dearly missed by her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren & extended family & friends.

A DUTCH SERVICE
will be held April 18, 2010 in the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m.
Rev. Ralph Koops will be preaching.



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Heritage Fellowship CRC in Brampton, Ontario, is seeking a full time person to join our pastoral team. All our congregation's members live in Holland Christian Homes, a senior's complex of some 1,100 residents. Good conversational Dutch required. For more information contact hfchurch@hch.ca with "pastoral search" in subject line, or call 905.796.7424.

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Inquiries can be sent to:

Search Committee, Mountainview CRC
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or email searchcommittee@mountainviewcrc.org.

Further information can be obtained by visiting our website at www.mountainviewcrc.org or by contacting

Harry DeVries, chair of Search Committee,
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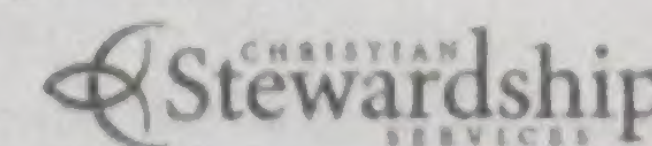
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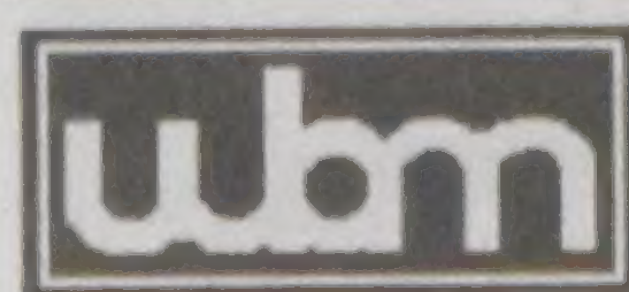
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Apr 9** The Wookstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "Mister Doe-Het Zelf" at the **London Dutch Canadian Hall in London**. See Feb 8 issue for details or call 519-283-6285
- Apr 16 HANNAH HOUSE** Spring Breakfast fundraiser 7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Club Italia, 2525 Montrose Road, **Niagara Falls** To sponsor a table, or to reserve seats, please contact Rachel at **905.353.8552** or send an email to info@hannahhouse.ca You have a chance to win an overnight stay at a bed and breakfast!
- Apr 17** The Wookstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "Mister Doe-Het Zelf" at the Blyth Festival Theatre in **Blyth** 8 p.m. See Feb 8 issue for details or call 519-283-6285
- Apr 18** Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Ralph Koops will be preaching.
- May 5** Canada/Netherlands Friendship Day, **Burlington**. Doors open at 6 P.M. program starts at 7 pm. Free admission, for more info visit www.cnfa.ca or contact Jack van der Laan at 905 332 7000 or Hans Kloet at 905 336 7184.
- May 13** The Liberation Choir Presents, Liberation 65 Concert with guest organist Martin Mans of the Netherlands, and The Choraliers, all male chorus 7.30 pm, Georgetown Christian Reformed Church, 11611 Trafalgar Road, **Georgetown**. For tickets contact Brian Bignell - 905.681.3776 or Lucy James - 905.877.8339. Tickets available at Bergsma's Paint and Wallpaper and at the door. For more information please visit www.liberationchoir.com
- May 14-16** Dutch ancestry conference. See p. 21 for more details.
- June 26, 27** Come celebrate the 50th anniversary of HCCS (formerly Athens Christian School). Contact www.hccs.ca or 613 498 4176.

The Liberation Choir Presents

Liberation 65 Concert

with guest organist
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HOPE & HOMES GALA

Please join Homestead Christian Care in launching
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An evening with Dr John Perkins

A pastor, author, evangelist and pioneer in Christian social justice and poverty reduction, Dr Perkins is the co-founder of the Christian Community Development Association. He will share an inspiring message of hope as we launch the Perkins Centre, putting Christian faith into action through affordable housing and community development.

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News

World Water Day:

Dirty water kills more people than violence, says UN

Mike Pflanz

LAMU, Kenya (CSM) — Almost all dirty water produced in homes, businesses, farms, and factories in developing countries is washed into rivers and seas without being decontaminated.

And up to 60 percent of supplies that have been purified to the point that they are potable are lost through leaky pipes and ill-maintained sewage networks, according to a report released on March 22, World Water Day. Saving half of these lost supplies could give clean water to 90 million people without the need for costly new infrastructure, says the UN.

"The sheer scale of dirty water means more people now die from contaminated and polluted water than from all forms of violence including wars," the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) said.

This includes 2.2 million people whose deaths are attributed to diarrhea, mostly from dirty water, and 1.8 million children aged under five who succumb to water-borne diseases. This equates to one infant every 20 seconds.

The findings were presented during a three-day conference held in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, to coincide with the annual focus on clean and sustained water supplies for a human population expected to

grow by 50 percent in the next four decades.

"If the world is to survive on a planet of 6 billion people heading to over 9 billion by 2050, we need to get smarter about how we manage wastewaters," Achim Steiner, UNEP's director, said in a press release. "Wastewater is quite literally killing people."

Rivers of sewage in the slums

Less than five miles from the downtown conference center hosting the water conference, Grace Gathura spent Monday morning as she always does — queuing for water at a communal tap in Nairobi's Kibera slum.

The shantytown, home to 1 million people largely ignored by the city authorities, is notorious for its "flying toilets."

Without decent latrines in their iron-walled huts, people are forced to defecate into plastic bags, which are then unceremoniously thrown out of the door.

The waste is among the 2 million tons of sewage and industrial or agricultural waste that ends up in rivers and streams each day.

Most of those water sources are then also used for cooking and cleaning water.

"I have lived here in Kibera for 12 years, and it is only two years ago that this tap was constructed," Mrs. Gathura said. "Before, there were people selling clean water at prices which are too high for us. But even now, there are many of us who do not find

L: Afghan children collect water from a pump in Kabul.



REUTERS



Indian women line up to fill water containers from a tanker at a shanty town in Calcutta.

AP



Greenpeace activists dye the Matanza-Riachuelo river green during a demonstration in Buenos Aires.

REUTERS

linked to contaminated water.

Easy solutions?

"It may seem like an overwhelming challenge but there are enough solutions where human ingenuity allied to technology and investments in nature's purification systems such as wetlands, forests, and mangroves can deliver clean water for a healthy world," said Mr Steiner.

Aside from recommending a focus on fixing leaky pipes, the World Water Day meeting called for water recycling systems and multi-million dollar investments in sewage treatment works.

But, the UN added, just \$20 million could pay for drip-irrigation and tread pumps to draw water from wells, which could lift 100 million poor farming families out of extreme poverty.

ODDS AND TRENDS

Log on for Internet Evangelism Day

On Sunday, April 25, churches around the world will focus on how to share the gospel online. Internet Evangelism Day has been an outreach opportunity and resource for Christians since 2005. Its website hosts free evangelistic tools: ready-made downloads in PowerPoint, video clips, handouts, drama scripts and music. It also offers advice, such as tips for building a church website that is "outsider friendly," using Twitter in evangelism, and ideas for effective blogging. It's an initiative of the Internet Evangelism Coalition, based at the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton. It is supported by a wide range of Christian leaders and groups.

"Perhaps surprisingly," a press release says, "you do not need to be technical to share your faith online." Anyone can volunteer to be an email mentor to inquirers with several large online outreach ministries. Check out internetevangelismday.com for more information.

A busy spare room

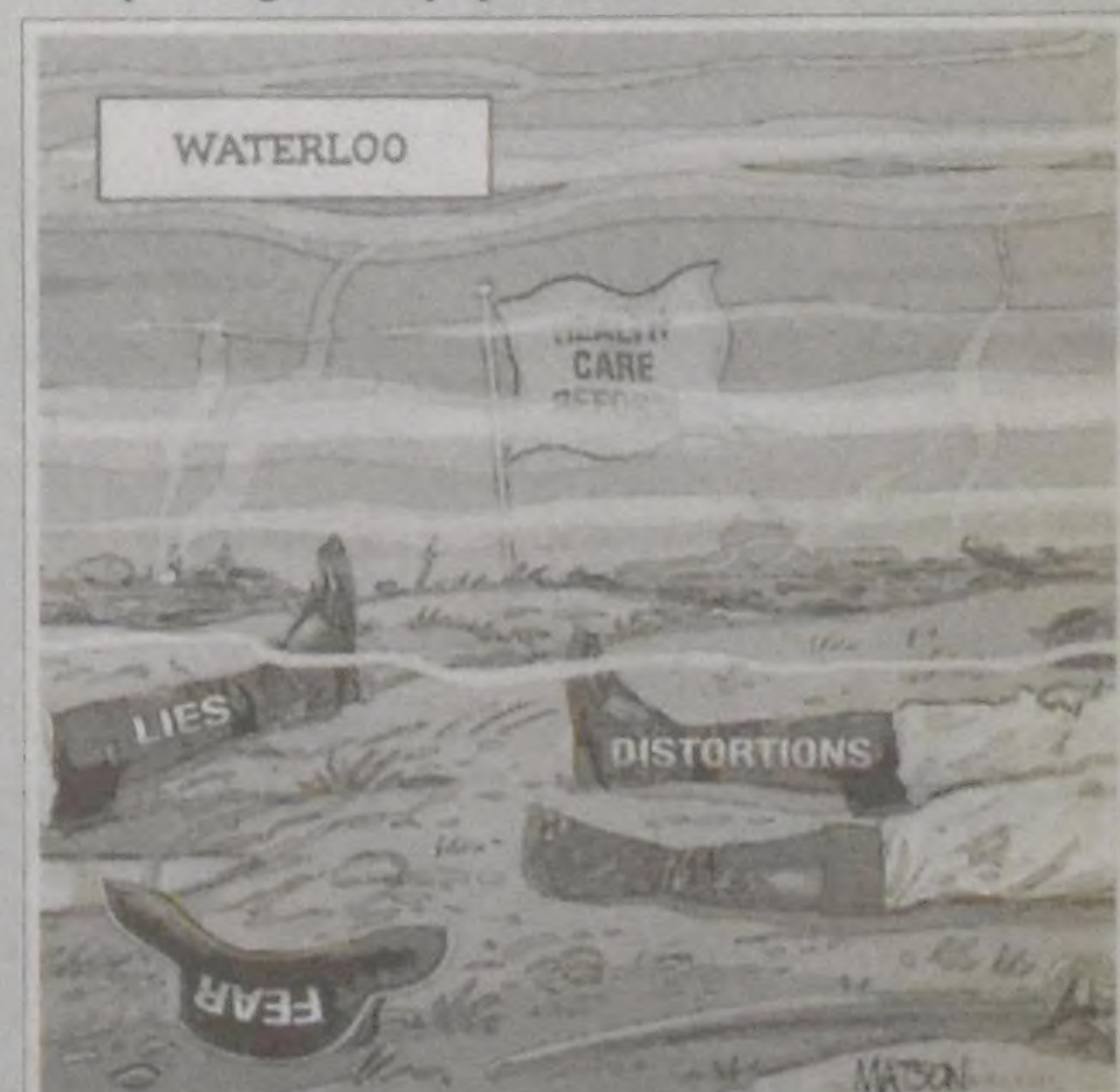
Don't haul that old bed off to the Salvation Army yet — long-term houseguests are coming. A study last week out of the Pew Research Center shows that 49 million Americans now live in multi-generational homes. This includes co-habitation with aging parents, adult children and/or grandchildren. It's the "family form that had been prevalent through a century ago, then fell

out of favour," says Paul Taylor, executive vice-president of Pew.

The recession, a rise in immigration and unemployment among young adults have all contributed to the trend, which brings the United States closer to living patterns around the globe. An estimated 20 percent of young adults and 20 percent of seniors now live in multi-generational homes in the US. Taylor wonders whether families might play the role of the ultimate safety net in the future for aging baby boomers. Well, let's hope Junior's taking good notes.

A healthy dose of laughter

Within twenty-four hours of President Obama's successful Health Care Bill vote, political cartoon syndicates had thoroughly covered the event. Reactions among cartoonists were as varied as among the general population.



Angela Reitsma Bick